STARS AND STRIPES®

stripes.com

Volume 77, No. 196 ©SS 2019 FRIDAY, JANUARY 18, 2019

平成12年4月5日 第三種郵便物認可 日刊（土日除く）
発行所 星条旗新聞社 〒106-0032 東京都港区六本木7丁目23番17号 定価￥100

$1.00

Expanding the shield

Trump touts future weapons capable of defeating all missiles during speech at Pentagon

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The United States will invest heavily in studying new technologies capable of defending the U.S. mainland against all current and future missile threats, including advanced hypersonic missiles under development by competing countries, President Donald Trump said Thursday in a speech at the Pentagon.

Trump, visiting the Defense Department headquarters to unveil his administration's review of America's multi-layered shield against missile threats, called out Iran as developing ballistic missiles capable of reaching the U.S. mainland while avoiding the names of other countries that already possess the ability, including North Korea, Russia and China.

SEE DEFENSE ON PAGE 6

President Donald Trump speaks about American missile defense doctrine Thursday at the Pentagon.

EVAN VUCCI/AP

ILLUSTRATION BY SEAN MOORES/Stars and Stripes
photos courtesy of U.S. Missile Defense Agency, iStock

Deaths put spotlight on Syria policy

BY KAREN DEYOUNG
The Washington Post

The four Americans killed in Manbij, Syria, on Wednesday — two soldiers, a Defense Department civilian and a military contractor — matched the largest number of deaths from hostile fire in an incident overseas since Donald Trump became president.

The killings, in a suicide explosion claimed by Islamic State, came less than a month after Trump declared the militants defeated and ordered that the 2,000 U.S. troops in Syria be withdrawn.

Since then, the administration's strategy has been thrown into confusion, as Trump's defense secretary, Jim Mattis, resigned in protest. The announced pace of withdrawal has varied, and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has sought aid from Arab allies. New conditions have been set for the U.S. departure, even as the president has said he is determined that the troops leave sooner rather than later.

Other powers have rushed to fill the coming void, including Turkey, Russia and the government of Iranian-backed Syrian President Bashar Assad.

Manbij, wrested from the militants by U.S.-backed Syrian Kurdish fighters and American airpower in 2016, is a nexus of the interests and conflicts of the many players in Syria. As various interests squabbled in recent months over political and military control of the town, 25 miles south of the Turkish border, ISIS was the one actor that appeared to have been eliminated from the contest.

Instead, the bombing showed that it is likely to remain a force to be reckoned with in Syria for the foreseeable future.

SEE SYRIA ON PAGE 6

Manbij, wrested from the militants by U.S.-backed Syrian Kurdish fighters and American airpower in 2016, is a nexus of the interests and conflicts of the many players in Syria.

EUROPE

Army to ramp up rotations to combat training centers

By John Vandiver
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — The Army is planning to boost the pace of rotations to its combat training centers in the United States and Germany, going from 20 this year to 32 in 2020 as the service emphasizes higher end combat skills.

Gen. Mark Milley, the Army's chief of staff, said on Wednesday that a push is underway to send more units to the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, Calif. and a similar center in Hohenfels, Germany. The effort coincides with a strategy centered on gearing up for "high intensity conflict against a strategic global competitor," Milley told an Association of the U.S. Army conference in Washington.

As an Army "we are on the mend," Milley said. "Our near competitors, our adversaries, however have capitalized on the last 17 years to advance their own position."

Since 2001, the Army's main focus has been on battling insurgencies and conducting counter-terrorism missions. As a result the combat skills needed to fight a more sophisticated foe have atrophied, analysts claim.

A more assertive Russia and China, two countries that have invested heavily in military modernization efforts, has forced a shift in the military's focus to "great power competition."

The Army's main challenge, is to prepare to fight "on the high end and on the low end" at the same time, Milley said.

Milley, who is expected to replace Gen. Joseph Dunford as the chairman of the Joint Chiefs in 2020, said the Army has already taken steps to better prepare units and boost the overall combat readiness of the force. This year, all operational units, including those in Europe and the Pacific, will be filled at 100 percent manning, Milley said. Next year, it will increase to 105 percent manning.

In recent years, many units have been manned at levels of about 85 percent. By boosting it to 100 percent or more, units are better able to cope if some soldiers become non-deployable for any reason.

Training also will intensify as the Army prepares units to face adversaries with skills unseen on the battlefields in Afghanistan and Iraq, such as opponents capable of conducting electronic warfare, firing missiles, and mounting assaults by air and sea.

A key part of the training, will be developing the ability to launch mass fire attacks from the ground, Milley said. But for Army combat units, there will be a learning curve on a skill crucial for soldiers during the Cold War, but neglected in the years since.

"We stopped training on it," Milley said. "We have an entire generation of leaders who don't really understand completely the whole idea of fires," Milley said.

The Army has begun to recapture those skills, he said.

Going forward, Milley said developing long range precision fires from ground forces — a top Army modernization effort — will provide "a decisive advantage" in future fights.

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MARTIN EGNASH/Stars and Stripes

American soldiers speed toward their objective in a Stryker during Exercise Saber Junction in Hohenfels, Germany, in 2017.

Putin blasts US, West over NATO ahead of visit to Serbia

By Dusan Stojanovic
Associated Press

BELGRADE, Serbia — Vladimir Putin has accused the U.S. and the West of destabilizing the Balkans with NATO expansionist policies as Serbia prepared a hero's welcome for the Russian president.

Putin landed at Belgrade airport on Thursday after his presidential plane was escorted over Serbian airspace by MiG-29 fighter jets he recently donated to Serbia. It is his fourth visit to the Balkan country since 2001. A fountain on Belgrade's main square was lit in the colors of the Russian and Serbian flags, bookstores in the capital are displaying works about Putin, and a plateau in front of the biggest Orthodox Church in the Balkans was being hastily paved before his visit to the temple.

Serbia has maintained close links with traditional Slavic ally Russia even as the country formally seeks European Union membership. Belgrade has refused to join Western sanctions against Russia over Ukraine and has promised it will stay out of NATO.

Putin told two Serbian pro-government newspapers in an interview published Wednesday that "the policy of the United States and certain Western countries aimed to foster their dominance in the region constitutes a major destabilizing factor."

Despite strong Russian opposition, Montenegro joined NATO in 2017 while Macedonia is trying to settle its name dispute with Greece in order to join the Western military alliance. Last week, NATO foreign ministers restarted a program that could also lead to Bosnia's membership. Serbia's four other neighbors are already members.

"In 2017, Montenegro was drawn into NATO in disregard of the opinion of half of its population," Putin said. "They did not dare to hold a relevant referendum. The country is going through a period of political instability as a result."

Two Russian military secret service operatives have been accused in Montenegro for trying to stage a coup in in the tiny Adriatic state in 2016 to stop it from joining NATO.

TODAY
IN STRIPES

American Roundup 18
Business 20
Comics, Crossword 42, 46-47
Faces 43
Opinion 44-45
Sports 55-64
Weather 20
Weekend 21-42

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PACIFIC

Disagreement over cost-sharing raises fears of withdrawal

By Kim Gamel and Yoo Kyong Chang
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — While the United States and North Korea try to revive nuclear talks, another dispute is simmering on the southern half of the peninsula over funding for U.S. forces.

Seoul and Washington failed to agree on a new cost-sharing deal for the 28,500 U.S. servicemembers stationed in South Korea before the latest five-year contract expired on Dec. 31.

That has raised fears that President Donald Trump may threaten to draw down forces as he prepares for a possible second summit with North Korea.

The longtime allies held 10 rounds of talks since March but remained deadlocked as the new year began over Washington's reported demand that South Korea increase its contribution by as much as 150 percent.

The Special Measures Agreement, as the funding deal is known, largely covers the salaries of South Korean employees who staff restaurants and provide other crucial services for the troops, dependents and civilian contractors.

U.S. Forces Korea, the main command, has warned the Korean Employees' Union that it may have to put local staff on unpaid leave in mid-April if an agreement isn't reached.

That would be a blow to South Korean President Moon Jae-in's administration, which is facing criticism over a rising unemployment rate.

The two sides continue to work on concluding a new deal, according to the State Department, but no date has been publicly announced for more formal talks.

The allies also missed the Dec. 31 deadline in 2013, but they managed to reach a deal a few weeks later when South Korea agreed to increase its contribution by 5.8 percent, with a 4 percent cap on the inflation rate.

"While a gap between agreements is not ideal, it does occasionally occur," a State Department spokesperson told Stars and Stripes in an email.

"For example, in 2014, the SMA did not enter into force until June despite the earlier agreement expiring in December 2013," the official said, declining to provide more details about an ongoing bilateral negotiation.

Raising the stakes

While brinkmanship is common in the funding talks, Trump has upped the ante by demanding an unprecedented increase that officials say the South Korean government couldn't accept even if it wanted to due to political and domestic constraints.

The U.S. administration also is asking to renegotiate the agreement every year instead of every five years as is current practice, according to South Korean media.

"Washington is asking too much. It needs to be at a level that our people can swallow," said South Korean lawmaker Baek Seung-joo, a deputy defense minister under the previous Conservative government and a ranking member of the National Assembly's Defense Committee.

The SMA has to be ratified by the legislature.

"It doesn't take into consideration South Korea's ability to shoulder the financial burden," Baek said. "It's not like the number of American troops in Korea has been doubled."

Baek and other South Korean officials believe Trump's rhetoric on withdrawing troops is a bargaining chip and both sides insist the alliance remains "ironclad."

But experts note that Trump has made efforts to force allies to pay more a key part of his presidential platform and shown that he's willing to act unilaterally by ordering the withdrawal of troops from Syria.

Closer to home, Trump announced the suspension of joint military exercises on the peninsula without consulting with South Korea or his own aides after his first summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on June 12 in Singapore.

Marcus Fichtl/Stars and Stripes

President Donald Trump speaks with South Korean President Moon Jae-in and troops from both nations over lunch at Camp Humphreys, South Korea on Nov. 7, 2017.

"The president is using the potential of troop withdrawal to influence SMA negotiations, to get more out of the deal," said Kyle Ferrier of the Korea Economic Institute of America, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank.

"This is a fundamental difference because it puts the long-term strategic interests of the U.S. on the line in exchange for short-term economic gains, which is not something that we, to my knowledge, at least publicly, have been done before," he said in a telephone interview.

Withdrawal worries

The dispute is putting pressure on the alliance, which was forged in the 1950-53 Korean War, amid sensitive diplomacy with North Korea over its nuclear weapons program. The two sides are believed to be planning a second summit between Trump and Kim, possibly as soon as mid-February.

Ferrier and others say Trump could use the cost-sharing dispute as an excuse to reduce troops without making it seem like a concession to the North, which along with China has long sought to evict the Americans from the peninsula.

"In recent weeks, Trump has complained, both in private and public, that South Korea isn't paying enough to support U.S. troops there," Washington Post columnist Josh Rogin wrote. "The worst-case scenario is that Trump will agree to withdraw U.S. troops from the Korean Peninsula [and blame it on the South Koreans] at his upcoming summit with Kim Jong Un."

The president has made clear that he would like to withdraw forces from South Korea to save costs.

Worries that he would act on his words were high enough that Congress moved to restrict the Pentagon's ability to cut troop numbers in South Korea below 22,000 in the defense policy bill for this year.

Moon has insisted the U.S. troop presence is a matter for the allies to decide and told reporters earlier this month that Kim understands that "USFK is not linked to the denuclearization process of the Korean Peninsula."

Observers familiar with the issue say the senior diplomats leading the negotiations so far have reached a wall and intervention by Trump and Moon will be needed to break the impasse.

South Korea has helped offset the costs of stationing U.S. forces in South Korea since 1991. The State Department hasn't given details about its latest demands, saying only that South Korea should pay "significantly more."

"We have an understanding that we should raise this cost a little bit higher than the previous one," said Won Gon Park, a professor at Handong Global University who was involved in previous SMA negotiations on the South Korean side.

"As far as I know, South Korea and the United States almost reached agreement on a 20 percent increase," he added. But, he said, Trump apparently ordered the U.S. team to demand that South Korea double its contribution in their last meeting, which was held last month in Seoul.

Complicating factors

The negotiations are complicated by other factors, including plans for upcoming cost-sharing talks with Japan, which hosts some 50,000 U.S. troops, as well as demands for NATO allies to increase their contributions.

Trump may want to use the South Korea talks to show he's unwilling to back down.

Seoul insists it pays a fair share at some $850 million per year, or nearly half the total cost of stationing the troops in the South.

South Korea also footed most of the $11 billion-plus bill for the expansion of the Camp Humphreys Army garrison as part of a long-delayed plan to relocate most U.S. forces south of Seoul.

The dispute isn't expected to affect military readiness in the near-term, and so far it's business as usual on the bases as there are reserve funds to keep operations running.

North Korea watchers, however, worry it will have a lasting effect by stoking uncertainty in the alliance, especially if Trump moves to reduce the U.S. military footprint.

"It creates real, long-term reliability questions with U.S. allies," Ferrier said, noting Seoul already is seeking to develop its own military capabilities.

"In one sense that's fine and welcome," he added. "But if we were to move out too quickly, I think it would potentially present options for exploitation from North Korea and China."

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Two F-15s make emergency arrested landings within minutes of each other

By Carlos M. Vazquez II and Aya Ichihashi
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Safety issues forced a pair of F-15 fighter jets to land on the same runway — in opposite directions — within minutes of each other this week at the Air Force's most active base in the Far East.

Both Air Force aircraft landed safely at Okinawa's Kadena Air Base at about 10:30 a.m., with emergency response vehicles waiting, said Okinawa Defense Bureau spokesman Masashi Katsuren.

The aircraft made arrested landings, catching their tailhooks on cables on opposite ends of the installation's south runway, according to witnesses quoted by the Okinawa Times newspaper. Kadena's north runway has been closed for construction since Jan. 8.

One F-15 experienced an unsafe gear indication and the other had a hydraulic issue, according to a statement issued Thursday by Kadena's 18th Wing. Both pilots landed their aircraft safely without incident, it added.

"Our Airmen are well-trained to execute their missions under any conditions, and they handled this particular incident in a professional, safe manner," the statement said.

The jets were towed to hangars, according to the Okinawa Times report. The runway was back in service at 11:20 a.m.

During the temporary closure, four other aircraft were diverted to nearby Marine Corps Air Station Futenma.

The incident happened a day after a leaky seal forced an F-16D Fighting Falcon from Misawa Air Base in northern Japan to make a precautionary landing at a regional airport in Aomori prefecture.

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MILITARY

Report: Fitzgerald's near miss not reviewed

Investigation finds timely look at earlier incident may have prevented collision

By Caitlin Doornbos
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — A serious review of a near miss by the USS Fitzgerald in May 2017 might have prevented a collision five weeks later that killed 17 sailors, according to a leaked naval investigation reported by a military newspaper.

The Navy Times this week published a series of articles on the Navy's internal report of the Fitzgerald's collision with an oil tanker near Singapore on June 17, 2017.

The Navy report, in part, criticized the failure to review the near miss, which happened May 10, 2017, near Sasebo, Japan.

Much of the Navy investigation centered on the earlier incident, according to the Navy Times.

The internal report described a junior officer becoming "confused by the surface contact picture" of ships near the Fitzgerald and calling the guided-missile destroyer's then-commanding officer, Cmdr. Robert Shu, to the bridge, according to the newspaper.

Shu steered the destroyer behind a merchant vessel and left the bridge, according to the Navy Times. As the Fitzgerald passed by the merchant vessel's stern, another ship was detected on the opposite side.

The report said an officer on duty "sounded five short blasts and ordered all back full emergency to avoid collision" and a potential crash was averted, according to the Navy Times. Shu was not on the bridge when the incident occurred.

In the Fitzgerald's fatal collision five weeks later, Cmdr. Bryce Benson — who took over for Shu on May 13, 2017 — was also absent from the bridge but, unlike in the close call near Sasebo, no one sounded the blasts to alert surrounding ships, according to the post-collision report.

Rear Adm. Brian Fort, who investigated the fatal collision, wrote in the internal report that a critical self-review after the incident could have helped prevent the fatal crash, according to the Navy Times.

"Had the [commanding officer] and [executive officer] critiqued the near-collision, they may have identified the root causes [of the fatal Fitzgerald collision] uncovered by this investigation," Fort said in the report, according to the newspaper.

Cmdr. J. Dorsey, Navy assistant chief of information, told Stars and Stripes by email Wednesday the service has "no report or additional information to provide regarding Fitzgerald's near-collision in Sasebo in May 2017."

Dorsey pointed to a paragraph describing the Fitzgerald's lack of self-review described in the combined Fitzgerald and USS John S. McCain post-collision report.

"The command leadership did not foster a culture of critical self-assessment," the report said. "Following a near-collision in mid-May, leadership made no effort to determine the root causes and take corrective actions in order to improve the ship's performance."

To address the issue, the Oct. 26, 2017, post-collision report suggested the Navy "establish and utilize near-miss reporting processes to share lessons across the surface force."

Comment from the Navy on the implementation of that suggestion was not immediately available Thursday.

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Peter Burghart/Courtesy of the U.S. Navy

The guided-missile destroyer USS Fitzgerald returns to Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, after a collision with a merchant vessel on June 17, 2017.

USS Wasp drills with Japan in East China Sea

By Christian Lopez
Stars and Stripes

The USS Wasp recently spent two days sailing with a Japanese amphibious ship in the East China Sea to test their ability to communicate and maneuver together.

The Jan. 12-13 "cooperative deployment" involved vessels of the Sasebo-based Wasp Amphibious Ready Group — including the USS Ashland and USS Green Bay — and the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force amphibious transport dock JS Kunisaki, a Navy statement said.

The East China Sea is home to the uninhabited Senkaku islands, which have long been a point of contention between Japan and China. The resource-rich chain between Okinawa and Taiwan are claimed by Japan, Taiwan and China, which refers to them as Diaoyu.

"We understood each other's radio calls very clearly, and they were very quick with their responses," Petty Officer 1st Class Jose Gonzales, Amphibious Squadron 11's navigation assessor, said in the statement.

During the event, Capt. Jim McGovern, the squadron's commodore, also toured the Kunisaki and met with its crew, according to the statement.

"It was a great opportunity to visit Kunisaki and see in person how well she and the ships of Wasp [Amphibious Ready Group] can operate together," he said. "Our ability to work and train together with our JMSDF partners is a key enabler that ensures security and stability in the Indo-Pacific Region."

The exercise follows mobilization of China's DF-26, an anti-ship ballistic missile, after a freedom-of-navigation mission by the guided-missile destroyer USS McCampbell on Jan. 7 near the Paracel Islands in the neighboring South China Sea.

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson visited China from Jan. 13-16 to express the importance of "professional interaction at sea" amid the growing tensions and met with Vice Adm. Shen Jinlong, commander of the People's Liberation Army Navy, according to a Navy statement released Tuesday.

"The U.S. Navy will continue to conduct routine and lawful operations around the world, in order to protect the rights, freedoms and lawful uses of sea and airspace guaranteed to all," Richardson said in the statement. "This will not change. Enhancing the prosperity of all is the direct result of a secure and orderly maritime domain."

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Fort Hood soldier killed at National Training Center is identified

By Rose L. Thayer
Stars and Stripes

AUSTIN, Texas — Army Spc. Octavious Deshon Lakes Jr. was identified Wednesday by service officials as the soldier who died from injuries sustained in a tactical vehicle accident Jan. 14 at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif.

Lakes, 22, was killed in a rollover accident in an M2 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle during an exercise. Three others were injured.

Lakes, whose home of record is listed as Buford, Ga., entered the Army in March 2017 as a combat engineer. He was assigned to 3rd Brigade Engineer Battalion, 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, at Fort Hood, Texas, since June 2017. He deployed in support of Operation Spartan Shield in Kuwait from July to October 2017.

"On behalf of Greywolf soldiers and families, Command Sgt. Maj. (Alfred) Ronneburg and I would like to extend our deepest condolences to the family and loved ones of Spc. Octavious Lakes," said Col. Kevin S. Capra, commander of the 3rd "Greywolf" Brigade at Fort Hood. "His dedication, professionalism and spirit will be missed, but never forgotten."

Lakes' awards and decorations include two Army Achievement Medals, National Defense Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon and Overseas Service Ribbon.

The accident is under investigation by the Army's Combat Readiness Safety Center.

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MILITARY

Coasties in Bahrain feel the pain of the shutdown

By Joshua Karsten
Stars and Stripes

BAHRAIN — Like their colleagues back home, hundreds of Coast Guard members in Bahrain are working without pay due to the partial government shutdown. What's different is the "Coasties" out here face a potential adversary nearby in Iran.

In sharp contrast to the service's tasks back home, the contingent based in Bahrain is at the center of growing tensions between Washington and Tehran, which is furious over President Donald Trump's decision to pull out of an international agreement on Iran's nuclear program and re-impose sanctions on that country. The Coast Guard was first deployed to the Persian Gulf in 2002 and now has a permanent presence as it helps bolster naval power in the region at the request of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command.

The force is there "because of our unique skillsets and expertise," said Capt. J. Paul Gregg, the unit's commodore. These include maritime interdiction, training foreign forces, port security and preventing smuggling.

But, while operating tactically under the Navy, the Coast Guard still falls under the Department of Homeland Security and its members here are among the service's 42,000 officers and enlisted personnel who, along with some 800,000 federal workers, are having to make ends meet as best they can for the past several days.

Defense Department appropriations were approved last year, allowing funding for most of the armed services to continue when Congress failed to reach an agreement before Christmas to fund the government. President Donald Trump and Democrats remain at a stalemate over funding for a wall along the border with Mexico. The deadlock has forced federal workers to be sent on furlough or to work without pay.

"The U.S. Coast Guard has been proactively communicating the impacts of the lapse in appropriations across the service," Gregg said of the shutdown. "As a unit, we have been proactive in sharing those communications, and working with our people on an individual level to help them both plan and seek assistance if needed, as the lapse in appropriations continues."

Across the Coast Guard, support resources available to servicemembers include financial counseling, loans, information and aid from other military support organizations. This week, the service's commandant announced that the USAA insurance and financial services company had donated $15 million, which officials said would be used to fund interest-free loans for about two weeks' worth of bills.

"There are many resources available to their dependents back home," said Senior Chief Ryan Doss, a spokesperson for Coast Guard Atlantic Area, the Bahrain team's parent command. "By engaging with our deployed members here ... we hope to minimize the personal impacts [of the shutdown] on our crews and their families."

The Coast Guard unit, made up of about 240 active-duty servicemembers, operates six Island Class patrol boats permanently stationed at Naval Support Activity Bahrain.

The cutters perform a variety of missions including patrols, exercises and joint engagements with allies in the region. All members are serving one-year, unaccompanied assignments and "just over half" are supporting dependents stateside, according to Gregg.

Courtesy of the U.S. Coast Guard Patrol Forces Southwest Asia

U.S. Coast Guard Patrol Forces Southwest Asia are shown last month. Members of the Coast Guard's largest overseas unit, with about 240 active-duty members, are officially working without pay.

Despite attempts in Washington to push the money through, Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz confirmed Tuesday in a statement that the mid-January paychecks were not coming, saying it marked the first time he was aware of when servicemembers in one of the armed forces branches haven't been paid during a shutdown.

The Coast Guard also created a Lapse in Appropriations Guide website for Coast Guard members that provides information, tips and resources, such as letters to send to creditors that explain the situation. The guide is located at https://www.dcms.uscg.mil/budget/.

Fortunately for Coast Guard members in Bahrain, they live in government-leased housing off base, meaning they won't have to worry about impatient landlords. That's a relief for many, given the high cost of living in Bahrain, where average rents range from over $2,000 a month for single junior enlisted sailors to over $3,000 a month for chiefs or junior officers with dependents.

"I mean, it sucks," a Coast Guardsman on base told Stars and Stripes, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivities surrounding the shutdown. Still, he remained optimistic that he would get his money "sooner or later."

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USS South Dakota sub to soon join Navy fleet

Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. — A $2.6 billion submarine named for the state of South Dakota is getting ready to join the U.S. Navy fleet.

The 377-foot USS South Dakota will be commissioned on Feb. 2 at the Navy base in Groton, Conn., the Argus Leader reported. The vessel will be the 17th Virginia-class attack submarine to join the fleet and the first submarine to be commissioned with the name South Dakota.

The submarine force's primary role is to stay forward-deployed, undetected and ready to deliver a warfighting capability when needed, said Craig Liddy, the ship's commanding officer, in a video interview released by the Department of Defense.

Russia, US: No progress in nuclear arms pact dispute

Associated Press

GENEVA — Talks have made no progress in resolving the United States' intention to withdraw from a nuclear arms treaty, U.S. and Russian diplomats said Tuesday.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov met in Geneva with U.S. Undersecretary of State Andrea Thompson about the dispute over the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.

The 1987 treaty between the United States and the Soviet Union bans production, testing and deployment of land-based cruise and ballistic missiles with a range of 310-3,400 miles. President Donald Trump in October said the U.S. would abandon the treaty because of alleged Russian violations. Moscow claims the U.S. is violating the treaty.

The United States says it will exit the treaty in early February if Russia does not end its violations.

MILITARY

Syria: Blast stirs debate over withdrawal plan

FROM FRONT PAGE

Though the attack seemed to belie Trump's claims about the militants' defeat, those who have supported the U.S. withdrawal said it proved he is right to claim a win on his own terms and get out.

"I stand with the president in putting #AmericaFirst, bringing our troops home and declaring victory," Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., said in a Twitter post as he headed for the White House to see Trump. After they spoke, Paul issued a statement saying he had "never been prouder" of the president, who "stood up for a strong America and steadfastly opposed foreign wars."

But others said the bombing deaths — which included an unknown number of Manbij residents and Syrian Kurdish fighters — were a direct result of a foolish and abrupt departure announcement, and had made the case for staying.

"From the beginning, I thought the president was wrong" in ordering the withdrawal, said Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee. "It was a strategic mistake for the whole region."

Until Thursday afternoon, Trump said nothing, issuing no public statement about the U.S. casualties — including at least three wounded by the bomb — or how the administration would respond.

Instead, it was left to Vice President Mike Pence to issue a statement, which he said was on behalf of the president and himself, condemning the "terrorist attack" and commiserating with the loved ones of the dead. "We have crushed the ISIS caliphate and devastated its capabilities," he said. "As we begin to bring our troops home … we will never allow the remnants of ISIS to reestablish their evil and murderous caliphate — not now, not ever."

ANHA/via AP

Debris lies before a restaurant where an explosion occurred in Manbij, Syria, on Wednesday.

The four deaths doubled the total number of U.S. personnel killed by hostile fire in Syria since the deployment there began just over three years ago. It matched the number of Special Operations troops killed in a militant attack in Niger in October 2017.

By separating the destruction of the self-declared ISIS caliphate that once spanned large portions of Syria and Iraq from the existence of some 20,000-30,000 militants that U.S. officials believe remain in the two countries, the administration has carved out a relatively narrow definition of its objective.

But for some experts, it is the only realistic goal. "Manbij was captured two and a half years ago," when a U.S.-armed and trained ground force, composed largely of Syrian Kurds, expelled the Islamic State with the help of withering U.S. air attacks, said Robert Ford, a former U.S. ambassador to Syria who is now a senior fellow at the Middle East Institute.

"It's not like there wasn't stabilization progress in Manbij," a north-central Syrian city about 25 miles from the Turkish border. "Manbij was a showcase back in 2017," Ford said. What happened there Wednesday "is why I, at least, believe you can't fix ISIS with Americans," he said.

"Iraqis have to fix it; Syrians have to fix it," Ford said. "It's just not something that non-Arabic-speaking, non-Kurdish-speaking — however capable, dedicated and smart — American Special Ops guys are going to be able to do."

U.S. troops are stationed in and around Manbij as part of an agreement with Turkey. Ankara has long objected to the presence there of the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units, or YPG — the bulk of the U.S.-aligned force fighting the Islamic State. Turkey considers them terrorists allied with Turkish Kurdish separatists.

Last year, to prevent a threatened attack by Turkish forces accompanied by Turkey's Syrian Arab allies, the administration agreed to ease the occupying YPG out of Manbij and east of the nearby Euphrates River. U.S. and Turkish military forces would then jointly patrol the area around the town, a process that began late last year even as the Kurdish force largely remained.

Meanwhile, Assad's Syrian forces moved ever-closer to the town, hoping to reclaim the territory. This month, Russian ground forces also began patrols on the western side of Manbij.

Russia and Turkey hailed the U.S. decision to withdraw troops from across northeastern Syria, where the Americans have, in effect, been a bulwark between Turkish forces massed along the border and the Syrian Kurdish fighters who occupy both Arab and Kurdish border towns.

It was Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's complaints about this situation — and a pledge to take over the remaining fight against ISIS forces that have been driven far to the south — that prompted Trump's sudden agreement, in a Dec. 14 telephone call with the Turkish leader, to withdraw.

The decision appeared to fly in the face of the U.S. strategy announced last September, when senior administration officials said that American troops would remain until the militants were defeated, a protective arrangement had been worked out for the Syrian Kurdish fighters and, most important, Iran and its proxy forces aiding Assad had left the country.

During visits this month to Israel and Turkey, White House national security adviser John Bolton insisted that those objectives still would be met. They were conditions to which Trump appeared to acquiesce, although he has been vague in giving public voice to his agreement. Turkey called Bolton's comments "a serious mistake."

U.S. and Turkish military officials have discussed the establishment of a "safe zone" inside Syria along the border with Turkey.

Trump: 'Deepest condolences'

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Thursday offered his "deepest condolences" to the families of four Americans killed in Syria in a suicide explosion claimed by Islamic State.

Trump offered his first public remarks on the deaths, which occurred Wednesday, during an address at the Pentagon on missile defense strategy.

"My deepest condolences to the families of the brave American heroes who laid down their lives yesterday in selfless service to our nation," Trump said of the deceased, who included two soldiers, a Defense Department civilian and a military contractor. "These are great people, great, great people. We will never forget their noble and immortal sacrifice."

Defense: President to seek additional spending on anti-missile systems

FROM FRONT PAGE

Their arsenals are getting bigger and stronger," Trump said of those nations to a large, mostly uniformed military audience. "And we are getting bigger and stronger in every way. They are increasing their lethal strike capabilities, and … I will accept nothing less for our nation than the most effective, cutting-edge missile defense systems."

Trump's speech, which also touched on his priority to build a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border and at times was critical of Democrats and NATO partner countries including Germany, coincided with the Pentagon's release of its long-anticipated Missile Defense Review. The report, ordered by Trump in the early days of his presidency, was delayed more than one year due to changes in its scope and concerns by some officials that it could damage ongoing nuclear negotiations with North Korea, defense officials said.

It is the first official review of America's missile defense posture since 2010 and looks at the U.S. ability to defend itself against ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and hypersonic missiles, which are capable of traveling in excess of Mach 5 and are being developed in Russia and China.

The president announced he would seek a large investment in missile defense capabilities in his fiscal year 2020 budget proposal expected to be released next month. However, Trump did not say precisely how much money he wanted to fund new weapons systems and research into potential future programs, including space-based sensors and interceptors, studies of which are ordered in the report.

Trump did announce Thursday that the United States will add 20 new ground-based interceptors to Fort Greely in Alaska. The Missile Defense Review calls for adding at least 40 more of those anti-ballistic missile systems.

The United States' layered anti-missile system includes land-, sea-, and space-based elements that detect, track and target incoming missiles and is capable of defending against a limited attack using intercontinental ballistic missiles, weapons that can travel more than 3,400 miles. But America still relies primarily on diplomacy and deterrence to dissuade attacks by more modern weapons under development by nations such as Russia and China, defense officials have said.

"Effective deterrence is the preferred strategy to prevent missiles attack … however, a broader approach is required to address the increasingly complex missile threat environment," reads a summary of the report released Thursday.

Among the options under consideration to protect the U.S. mainland from increasing missile threats are adding a third location of ground-based missile interceptors to the 40 in Alaska and four located in California, an official said Wednesday. The United States is also working to advance its space-based, anti-missile systems to improve its tiered-defense method.

The "multi-layers approach to preventing and defeating missiles attacks will move the United States towards a more flexible and balanced overall defense posture that provides that broadest set of options in a crisis or conflict and improve the overall likelihood to counter offensive missile attacks successfully," the report states. "To do so, the United States will integrate active missile defenses with intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance and strike capabilities to counter regional offensive missile threats and rogue missile threats to the homeland."

While space-based, anti-missile systems remain years off, according to the report, the United States must invest development of such technology now to ensure it can keep up with Russia and China, the latter of which has already demonstrated advanced technology in space, including the ability to disable satellites.

The military's use of space has long been a top priority for Trump, who again said Thursday that the Pentagon would create a new military service, the Space Force, which would lead the way in the extraterrestrial "warfighting domain."

"A space-based missile defense layer … is going to be a very, very big part of our defense," Trump said. "And obviously of our offense.

"We will ensure enemy missiles find no sanctuary on earth or the skies above. This is the direction I am heading. We have some very bad players out there. We are a good player. If need be, I've always known, and I've been watching and I've seen that the stronger you are, the less you will need whatever that strength may be."

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MILITARY

New enlistees receive athletic shoes for free

By Martin Egnash
Stars and Stripes

They're American-made and they're free, at least to the basic training recruits who this month began receiving military-issued athletic shoes at no monetary cost — there's no accounting for blood, sweat and tears.

Previously, servicemembers were required to pay for running shoes, either out-of-pocket or with cash allowances, the Defense Logistics Agency said Tuesday. It announced that it had begun delivering the athletic footwear under a provision of the 2017 military funding bill requiring the Pentagon to provide the made-in-the-USA sneakers for free.

Under the mandate, more than 250,000 recruits from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and Air Force each year are expected to receive new kicks made by one of three American companies.

The Air Force was the first to receive theirs, which nearly 900 recruits began donning at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, on Jan. 2. The other branches are scheduled to begin receiving the new trainers later this year.

In the past, having troops buy their own shoes allowed the Defense Department to sidestep the Berry Amendment, a 1941 federal law requiring DOD to "buy American" as much as possible for uniform items and certain other goods. The effort to change that practice kicked off a 2016 fight in Congress, but it was eventually pushed through.

Most of the world's running shoes are made in Asia or contain some components manufactured overseas.

Boston-based New Balance Athletics, which introduced a Berry Amendment-compliant shoe in 2014, had long lobbied the government to follow that law and seemed most likely to benefit from the 2017 mandate, but there wasn't a single shoo-in when it came time for DLA to select manufacturers.

In the end, three American companies were awarded contracts, each with an 18-month base term and an optional second 18-month term.

The first contract, valued at an estimated $34 million, went to San Antonio Shoes in Texas to provide an initial 206,000 pairs, with up to 192,000 under the option term.

Puerto Rico-based Propper International got the second contract last February, valued at up to $27 million, for 180,250 pairs initially with 168,000 more possibly to follow.

Courtesy of the Defense Logistics Agency

Air Force clothing initial issue section chief Vernalynne Carter and 502nd Logistics Readiness Squadron commander Lt. Col Ernest Cage issue new, American-made athletic footwear to Air Force recruits Daniel Sterling, right, and Ryan Padro, second right, at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, on Jan. 3.

And last March, New Balance was tapped to provide 128,750 pairs at first and a possible 120,000 after that, for a total of up to $17 million.

The shoes, which will cost the government about $90 a pair, come in a variety of sizes to accommodate every type of soldier's foot. Some 100 men's sizes in four different widths from sizes four to 16 and 40 women's sizes in two widths from sizes 4 to 13 will be available.

"Recruits now have more variety in lengths and widths than any commercial athletic shoe in the world," said Air Force Col. Melvin Maxwell, the DLA Troop Support Clothing and Textiles director, in a statement.

In each size, shoes will come in three varieties based on the prospective wearer's feet: neutral for high arches, stability for moderate arches and motion control for low arches.

Navy recruits at Naval Station Great Lakes, Ill., are expected to begin getting the new shoes in April, followed by Army and Marine Corps recruits at those services' basic training bases in October.

The Coast Guard, which will place monthly orders, will begin phasing in the new DLA-procured shoes this month in Cape May, N.J., as it depletes its existing stock of American-made shoes from an earlier contract, said Chris Mouldon, manager of the Coast Guard Uniform Distribution Center.

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DOD developing vetting plan for recruits with foreign ties

By Dan Lamothe
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon, citing terrorism and espionage fears, is developing a plan to scrutinize prospective recruits with foreign ties, including some U.S. citizens, after a related effort targeting thousands of green-card holders was blocked by a federal judge last year.

The new policy, still in development, will be distributed to the military services by no later than Feb. 15, according to two defense officials and several Defense Department memos obtained by The Washington Post. The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity due to the issue's sensitivity.

The new vetting would likely screen thousands of recruits per year who have what the Pentagon considers "foreign nexus" risks, including Americans who marry a foreign spouse and who have family members with dual citizenship, the memos said. Anyone identified for the screening would not be allowed to attend recruit training until they are cleared, a process that could take days for some but drag on much longer for others.

> **'One primary concern ... with qualifying for these positions relates to the potential counterintelligence or terrorism risks.'**
>
> **Defense Department memo**

One draft document, labeled "predecisional," has circulated in recent weeks among senior officials and others who oversee recruiting. It is attributed to Joseph Kernan, the undersecretary of defense for intelligence, and James Stewart, who performs the duties of undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, a post President Donald Trump has left without a permanent political appointee since Robert Wilkie left it to run the Department of Veterans Affairs.

"One primary concern associated with qualifying for these positions relates to the potential counterintelligence or terrorism risks," the memo says. " ... The Department must implement expanded foreign vetting and screening protocols to identify and mitigate the foreign nexus risks."

The documents reveal how the Pentagon is grappling with the dual challenge of thoroughly screening prospective recruits for potential security threats and finding enough men and women willing to join the military. The Armed Forces have long sought green-card holders as recruits, marketing such jobs as a chance to attain U.S. citizenship.

Among the people who could be targets of the foreign-nexus screening are people who have foreign contacts, foreign citizenship, dual citizenship, a birthplace outside the United States if born to foreign parents, family members who are not U.S. citizens, and immediate family members who have dual citizenship, according to one of the memos.

Other factors that could require such screening include possessing a non-U.S. passport, having financial interests abroad, residing outside the United States for more than three of the previous 10 years, and living in the United States for less than the last five consecutive years unless the circumstances involved work related to the U.S. government.

A Dec. 21 memo prepared by Stephanie Miller, who oversees recruitment policy for the Pentagon, says the Defense Department recognized gaps associated with its screening of individuals with foreign ties "since the receipt of specific reporting beginning of 2016," though the memo does not specify what that information covers. But the concern stretches to some American citizens, too, she argued.

"DoD recognizes that some U.S. citizens pose a similar risk by virtue of their foreign associations, foreign travel, marriage to a foreign spouse, or dual citizenship," she wrote. "It is imperative to treat the risk related to a foreign nexus in a similar fashion for any recruit or Service member, regardless of citizenship."

The Pentagon is preparing the new policy after Kernan's office and the Army combined in the summer of 2018 to screen green-card holders already in the military through a new process that relies on dozens of existing intelligence databases, one Defense Department memo said. The screening detected more derogatory information about the service members in less time than traditional background checks managed by the Office of Personnel Management, the memo said.

The memo promised that the new process — called foreign nexus screening and vetting, or FNSV — "can be completed in a matter of days or, depending on the analysis required for detected anomalies, in a few weeks, as compared to the months and years" required under traditional background checks. The new screening process, the memo said, "can process up to 1,600 cases per day."

MILITARY

USARAF commander brings lessons learned

By Nancy Montgomery
Stars and Stripes

VICENZA, Italy — Maj. Gen. Roger Cloutier took command of U.S. Army Africa here at a complicated time in the use of American forces on the world's second-largest continent.

His tenure began just three months after the release of his investigation into the October 2017 attack near a village on the Niger-Mali border that left four soldiers on a special operations mission dead.

It was the U.S. military's largest loss of life in Africa since the 1993 mission in Somalia portrayed in the book and movie "Black Hawk Down," and set off a furor about clandestine operations and accountability within U.S. Africa Command and U.S. Special Operations Command that has yet to subside.

Meanwhile, since Cloutier took command in August, the Trump administration has said it plans to shift focus in Africa away from counterterrorism operations and toward "near-peer competition" with Russia and China, who are seeking to grow their influence on the continent and around the world.

Cloutier, already well-versed in broad strategic objectives in Africa from a previous post as chief of staff for the head of AFRICOM, sat down with Stars and Stripes last week in his office on Caserma Ederle for a wide-ranging interview about lessons learned from the deadly ambush and about the future of USARAF, which under his six predecessors expanded its budget and activities.

In the Niger inquiry, the general found widespread problems across all levels of the counterterrorism operation, including in training, communications, planning and oversight, prompting significant changes. Operations now require more oversight and support with less tolerance for risk, officials have said.

Courtesy of U.S. Army Africa

U.S. Army Africa commander Maj. Gen. Roger Cloutier speaks at a Veterans Day ceremony at the North Africa American Cemetery and Memorial in Carthage, Tunisia, on Nov. 12.

"There were a lot of lessons that came out of Niger," Cloutier said. "There's been a lot of hard work done to correct those."

The investigation also provided Cloutier with the lens for reviewing how USARAF operates.

"We make sure we understand why we're going there, who's going and what's the purpose," he said. "And if things aren't right or we don't feel comfortable with the risk associated with it, then we don't do it."

In the decade since USARAF and its parent AFRICOM were stood up, the component command has grown from an organization with a $10,000 budget for a single theater security cooperation event in 2008 to a $41-million operation that organized 545 such events over the past two years.

On any given day, USARAF oversees some 2,000 soldiers, many from a rotating stateside brigade. They do not engage in combat missions, but generally deploy in small groups for short periods of time to train local forces in a variety of combat skills and support for military operations.

As an example of using the command's finite resources to make a sustainable difference, Cloutier pointed to a contingent of three American soldiers he met on a recent trip to Tunisia where they were training troops on countering improvised explosive devices.

"The Tunisians are training hundreds of others," Cloutier said. "Now we're building capacity in the Tunisian army."

USARAF helped set up a sergeants major academy in Malawi five years ago to strengthen the country's noncommissioned officer cadre and has subsequently graduated more than 240 sergeants major from 18 African countries.

"Now it's a regional training area," Cloutier said. "Hey, that worked."

The command also co-hosts an annual conference of African army chiefs and participates in several annual medical and military exercises, the latter of which often involve training for United Nations peacekeeping operations.

While the Pentagon plans to withdraw hundreds of troops from Africa, about 10 percent of its forces there, to realign with its strategic focus on countering threats from China and Russia, USARAF so far is not expecting cuts.

Though some critics of the mission claim "if you go to Africa you consume readiness," Cloutier said, he disputes that view.

"It's a readiness builder," he said, adding that missions to boost partner country's capabilities are planned around U.S. training and readiness requirements. "I think in most cases we're able to achieve both."

Still, he said he supports the idea of swapping the regionally aligned brigade — currently the 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division — with one of the Army's new Security Force Assistance Brigades. Tailored for training and advising foreign militaries and police, and meant to free up brigade combat teams to focus on near-peer combat, such brigades comprise about 800 seasoned troops.

The Army plans to stand up six SFABs. Sen. Jim Inhofe, R-Okla., chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, has said he wants to see one in Africa, and AFRICOM's commander has supported the idea, but so far Afghanistan has gotten the first two publicly announced SFAB deployments.

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Lawmakers push new legislation to restore military cemetery

By Claudia Grisales
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Lawmakers are renewing their plans to move upkeep for the oldest military cemetery on the West Coast, which has long been neglected, under the care of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., and Rep. Mike Thompson, D-Calif., filed legislation in their respective chambers to restore Mare Island Naval Cemetery, a San Francisco Bay Area site where 860 servicemembers and veterans mostly from the Navy and Marine Corps were buried between 1858 and 1921.

The cemetery, which includes the graves of three Medal of Honor recipients and veterans from the War of 1812, Civil War and World War I, has since been under the care of the City of Vallejo, Calif., which hasn't had the funds to keep up the grounds.

"I think we have a pretty good chance of getting it done this time," said retired Navy Capt. Ralph Parrott, 77, of Fairfax, Va., who has led a coalition of veterans and volunteers across the country pushing for the move since 2017. "Our little band of merry, old men are trying to focus our efforts … We are going to be walking the halls of Congress to get as many senators and members of Congress to sponsor the bill."

The cemetery has fallen into dilapidation after its neighboring shipyard was closed through the Base Realignment and Closure Act in 1996.

Today, it's littered with dead leaves and bark, invasive roots, and neglected pepper and eucalyptus trees. Some of the cemetery's falling headstones from the 19th century are held up by logs.

Several groups have expressed support for the legislation, including the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Fleet Reserve Association, the Vietnam Veterans of America, AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, the Wounded Warrior Project and the U.S. Navy League.

Last year, Feinstein sponsored legislation modeled after a House version by Thompson that would transfer control of the cemetery from Vallejo to the VA's National Cemetery Administration, or NCA.

She filed a new version of the bill, S. 127, this week.

"In its current state, the Mare Island Naval Cemetery is no longer a fitting tribute to the 860 veterans and their families that are buried there," Feinstein said Tuesday in statement. "This was originally a naval cemetery so it makes sense to transfer control back to the federal government to ensure its properly repaired and maintained. We need to restore this historic cemetery, not just to honor the veterans buried there, but to show all veterans that their sacrifices will never be forgotten."

Sens. Kamala Harris, D-Calif., Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., Bob Menendez, D-N.J., and Edward J. Markey, D-Mass., are cosponsors of Feinstein's legislation.

Thompson has about 35 Democratic and Republican cosponsors for his bill, H.R. 578.

"The Mare Island Cemetery is an historic monument to the sacrifice of the hundreds of fallen American heroes buried there," Thompson said Tuesday in a statement. "As their final resting place, it is a sanctuary for our veterans and must be restored to its full beauty and potential."

But even as the plan gains supporters, it wasn't immediately clear where the VA might stand on the move this year. Last year, the agency voiced opposition against the proposal, testifying that there were alternatives to the VA caring for the cemetery.

The VA could not be reached late Wednesday for comment.

"The transfer of the Mare Island Naval Cemetery to VA could disrupt efforts currently underway to address the condition of the cemetery, and because acquisition of the cemetery by VA does not align with VA's current strategic objectives with respect to providing burial access to veterans and their families," Paul Lawrence, the VA's undersecretary for benefits, said in submitted testimony last year. The move "sets an unwanted precedent regarding veteran cemeteries in disrepair managed by localities, allowing them to eschew their responsibility to our nation's heroes."

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NATION

Trump approves back pay for furloughed employees

By Eric Yoder
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — When funding is restored to federal agencies shuttered by the partial government shutdown, employees who have been on unpaid furloughs will receive back pay, under legislation President Donald Trump signed Wednesday.

The measure extends to furloughed employees the same guarantee of eventual back pay that already had applied to those who have remained on the job in unfunded agencies because of the safety- or security-related nature of their work.

Of the 800,000 federal employees in unpaid status since Dec. 22, more than half have continued to work. They have been assured of back pay when funding is restored for their agency, but there had been no such assurance for those who were furloughed. In previous shutdowns, they, too, had been paid retroactively, however.

Back pay is to be provided "at the earliest date possible after the lapse in appropriations ends, regardless of scheduled pay dates," under the bill.

Sen. Ben Cardin, D-Md., said the bill provides "some long-term relief to furloughed workers, but we still need to reopen the government immediately. The promise of back pay will not cover the cost of rent or groceries today. It won't make a car payment or cover prescriptions."

Those who have applied for unemployment compensation due to being furloughed will have to repay those benefits once they receive back pay.

The bill also allows employees who are kept on the job in a partial shutdown to use leave, including vacation time, during that period, although that, too, could not be paid until funding is restored. It is unclear whether the provision could be applied to the current partial shutdown.

Rick Bowmer/AP

A TSA worker watches passengers at the Salt Lake City International Airport on Wednesday, in Salt Lake City.

TSA absentee rate still high, but down from Sunday's peak

Associated Press

TSA officials say the rate of airport screeners missing work during the partial government shutdown has stabilized just days before a three-day holiday weekend that is likely to bring bigger airport crowds.

The Transportation Security Administration said Wednesday that 6.1 percent of its airport screeners missed work Tuesday.

That's nearly double the absentee rate on the same day last year but the second-straight decline after the sick-out rate surged to 7.7 percent Sunday.

A TSA official said screeners this week should have received $500 bonuses and, for some, an extra day's pay, for working over the Christmas and New Year's holidays.

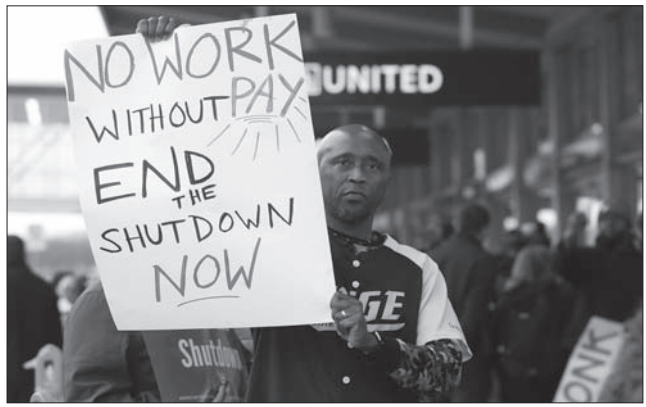
Meanwhile, air traffic controllers who are also working without pay lost an effort to force the government to pay them. A federal judge Tuesday rejected their union's request for an immediate temporary restraining order.

The National Air Traffic Controllers Association and the Treasury Department employees' union argued that the Trump administration is violating the Constitution and federal labor law by requiring members to work without pay. Another hearing in the case is set for Jan. 31.

The ranks of unpaid federal workers are growing. This week, the IRS said it will recall thousands of workers to handle tax returns, and the Federal Aviation Administration plans to bring 2,200 safety inspectors back to work.

The percentage of TSA officers missing work rose steadily last week but has declined slightly this week, according to the agency.

TSA Administrator David Pekoske announced last weekend that the agency would pay each officer a $500 bonus and that TSA processed pay for screeners who worked Dec. 22, the first day of the shutdown. An agency spokesman said officers should have received the money by Wednesday.



Rich Pedroncelli/AP

Federal employee Marcus Walker joined other federal employees and supporters at the Sacramento International Airport calling for President Donald Trump and Washington lawmakers to end the partial government shutdown on Wednesday, in Sacramento, Calif.

GOP dismisses request to postpone State of Union

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A grand Washington ritual became a potential casualty of the partial government shutdown as House Speaker Nancy Pelosi asked President Donald Trump to postpone his Jan. 29 State of the Union speech. She cited concerns about whether the hobbled government can provide adequate security, but Republicans cast her move as a ploy to deny Trump the stage.

In a letter to Trump, Pelosi said that with both the Secret Service and the Homeland Security Department entangled in the shutdown, the president should speak to Congress another time or he should deliver the address in writing.

Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen denied anyone's safety is compromised, saying Wednesday that both agencies "are fully prepared to support and secure the State of the Union."

GOP allies accused Pelosi of playing politics, with Republican Rep. Steve Scalise tweeting that Democrats are "only interested in obstructing @realDonaldTrump, not governing."

Pelosi, who issued the customary invitation to Trump weeks ago, hit the president in a vulnerable place, as he delights in taking his message to the public and has been preparing for the address for weeks.

The uncertainty surrounding the speech also underscored the unraveling of ceremonial norms and niceties in Trump's Washington, with the shutdown in its fourth week, the White House and Democrats in a stalemate and the impasse draining the finances of hundreds of thousands of federal employees.

Pelosi left unclear what would happen if Trump insisted on coming despite the welcome mat being pulled away. It takes a joint resolution of the House and Congress to extend the official invitation and set the stage.

"We'll have to have a security evaluation, but that would mean diverting resources," she told reporters when asked how she would respond if Trump still intended to come. "I don't know how that could happen."

During an Oval Office visit, Sen. Rand Paul said they discussed the shutdown but the president did not offer any reaction to Pelosi's suggestion to put off the speech.

Paul suggested on Twitter on Thursday that Trump deliver the address in the Senate, where Republicans hold a majority, which would be an unusual move.

As he weighs a response to Pelosi, Trump could not go forward with a State of the Union address in Congress without her blessing.

Number of federal workers seeking jobless aid doubles

By Christopher Rugaber
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of furloughed federal employees seeking unemployment benefits jumped in the first two weeks of the shutdown, topping 10,000 during the week of Jan. 5.

The Labor Department said Thursday that is double the number of federal workers who sought aid in the previous week. Typically fewer than a thousand former federal employees apply for jobless benefits each week.

Federal employees who aren't working during the partial government shutdown are eligible to claim unemployment aid, while those working without pay are not, the Labor Department has said. Yet even those sent home will have to repay the unemployment aid if they receive back pay once the shutdown ends.

The number of Americans overall who sought unemployment benefits last week declined 3,000 to 213,000, the government said. That figure doesn't include federal beneficiaries, who are tracked in a separate category. Applications by federal workers are reported with a one-week delay.

More furloughed federal workers could apply for unemployment benefits in the weeks ahead.

The shutdown that began Dec. 22 caused roughly 420,000 federal employees to work without pay. Another 380,000 are not at work and not being paid. Those numbers have shifted a bit in recent days as the IRS and some other agencies have called more employees back to work.

NATION

UTAH HIGHWAY PATROL/via AP

This drone photo shows a restaurant that was hit by a tractor-trailer in Wellington, Utah, on Wednesday. Authorities say the rig skidded off a snow-slicked road, flattening the eatery and injuring three people.

Speeding rig flattens Utah eatery

Associated Press

WELLINGTON, Utah — A speeding tractor-trailer skidded off a snow-slicked road Wednesday and crashed into a restaurant in a small Utah town, flattening the establishment and injuring 3 people, authorities said.

The truck was traveling too fast for conditions at about 6:30 a.m. when it went off a state highway that runs through the town of Wellington and struck the Los Jilbertos restaurant, which was open, the Utah Highway Patrol said in a statement.

State troopers rescued the restaurant owner's wife, who was trapped in the wreckage and suffered what were described as minor injuries. Also taken to a hospital for treatment of minor injuries were the restaurant owner and the truck driver, said Highway Patrol Sgt. Nicholas Street.

No customers were inside the restaurant when the truck hit it.

Images of the wreck showed the restaurant's snow-covered roof torn off and leaning on top of the collapsed restaurant, the semi-trailer's cab lodged into a corner of the building and the trailer jack-knifed. The restaurant is just off the highway, State Route 6.

The crash knocked out electrical and gas service to part of Wellington, a community of about 1,600 residents about two hours southeast of Salt Lake City.

FBI says Ga. man plotted to attack White House with antitank rocket

Associated Press

ATLANTA — A Georgia man who traded his car for an antitank rocket, guns and explosives in a plot to storm the White House is under arrest, authorities said.

Hasher Jallal Taheb, 21, of Cumming, was arrested in an FBI sting operation Wednesday and is charged with attempting to damage or destroy a building owned by the United States using fire or an explosive, U.S. Attorney Byung J. "BJay" Pak said.

The FBI set up the sting after a local law enforcement agency said in March that it got a tip from someone who said Taheb had become radicalized, changed his name and planned to travel abroad, according to an FBI agent's affidavit filed in court. A confidential FBI source and an undercover agent both made contact with Taheb after he advertised his vehicle for sale in August.

Special Agent Chris Hacker, who oversees the FBI office in Atlanta, said they believe Taheb was acting on his own.

The affidavit says Taheb told the FBI source in October that he planned to travel abroad for "hijra," which the agent wrote refers to traveling to territory controlled by Islamic State. Because he didn't have a passport, he couldn't travel abroad and told the FBI source that he wanted to carry out an attack in the U.S. against the White House and the Statue of Liberty.

He later mentioned other sites he'd also like to target, including the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial and a specific synagogue, the affidavit says.

He met with the undercover agent and the FBI source multiple times last month and was also in frequent contact using an encrypted messaging application, the affidavit says.

During one meeting with the agent and the source, Taheb "advised that if they were to go to another country, they would be one of many, but if they stayed in the United States, they could do more damage," the affidavit says. Taheb "explained that jihad was an obligation, that he wanted to do as much damage as possible, and that he expected to be a 'martyr,' meaning he expected to die during the attack."

At another meeting, he showed the undercover agent a hand-drawn diagram of the ground floor of the West Wing of the White House and detailed a plan for attack, the affidavit says. He asked the undercover agent to obtain the weapons and explosives needed to carry out the attack, and they discussed selling or exchanging their cars to pay for them.

Last week, Taheb told the undercover agent he wanted to pick up weapons this week and drive directly to Washington to carry out the attack, investigators said.

Taheb met with the FBI source and undercover agent on Wednesday in a parking lot in Buford to exchange their cars for semi-automatic assault rifles, three explosive devices with remote detonators and an anti-tank rocket, the affidavit says.

A second FBI source met them and inspected the vehicles, and a second FBI undercover agent arrived in a tractor trailer with weapons and explosives that had been rendered inert by the FBI, the affidavit says.

Taheb and the undercover agent and FBI source whom he believed to be part of his group turned over their car keys to the second confidential source and then loaded the inert explosives and guns into a rental vehicle, the affidavit says. Then, after they got into the car and closed the doors, agents arrested Taheb.

Giuliani: 'I never said there was no collusion'

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's lawyer Rudy Giuliani says he has "never said there was no collusion" between Russia and members of Trump's 2016 White House campaign.

Giuliani's comments night directly contradicted the position of his client, who has repeatedly insisted there was no collusion during his successful White House run. Giuliani himself had previously called the idea of Russian collusion "total fake news." But as court filings in the last year have detailed ties between Trump aides and Russia, he now appears to have left open the possibility of improper contacts.

"I never said there was no collusion between the campaign or between people in the campaign," Giuliani said Wednesday on CNN. It was not clear whether Giuliani was reflecting a new position or talking point from the Trump legal team or was making a strategic attempt to get ahead of potentially damaging findings from special counsel Robert Mueller, who has been investigating potential coordination between Russia and the president's campaign.

Either way, the comment reflected a stark turnabout from longstanding denials by the White House and Trump advisers of improper collusion. In November 2016, for instance, then-Trump spokeswoman Hope Hicks said, "There was no communication between the campaign and any foreign entity during the campaign."

Giuliani said that even if some on the campaign did something wrong, the president was not part of any collusion.

"There is not a single bit of evidence the president of the United States committed the only crime you could commit here, conspired with the Russians to hack the DNC," Giuliani said, referring to the Democratic National Committee.

In a statement Thursday aimed at clarifying the comments, Giuliani said, "I represent only President Trump not the Trump campaign. There was no collusion by President Trump in any way, shape or form. Likewise, I have no knowledge of any collusion by any of the thousands of people who worked on the campaign."

The comments on collusion came after Giuliani was reminded of prosecutors' allegations that former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort had lied about sharing campaign polling data with an associate U.S. authorities have tied to Russian intelligence.

Cohen doesn't deny report that he paid firm to rig polls

The Washington Post

Michael Cohen, President Donald Trump's former lawyer and fixer, did not dispute a report Thursday that he hired a technology company to help rig online polls in his boss' favor ahead of the 2016 presidential campaign and said what he did was at Trump's direction.

Cohen responded on Twitter to a Wall Street Journal story that said Cohen had promised to pay $50,000 to a small firm run by the chief information officer at Liberty University in Virginia, where evangelical leader and Trump supporter Jerry Falwell Jr. is president.

"As for the @WSJ article on poll rigging, what I did was at the direction of and for the sole benefit of @realDonaldTrump @POTUS," Cohen wrote. "I truly regret my blind loyalty to a man who doesn't deserve it."

According to the Journal article, John Gauger, who owns RedFinch Solutions, showed up at Trump Tower in New York in early 2015 expecting to collect $50,000 for his firm's work. Instead, Cohen presented a blue Walmart bag containing $12,000 to $13,000 in cash and a boxing glove that Cohen said had been worn by a Brazilian mixed-martial arts fighter, Gauger told the Journal. (Cohen denied to the Journal that he had paid cash.)

Gauger told the Journal that he never got the rest of what he claimed he was owed. But Cohen in early 2017 received a $50,000 reimbursement from Trump and his company for the RedFinch work, the Journal reported.

Cohen also has said he helped arrange payments at Trump's direction to silence women who claimed to have had affairs with Trump.

Former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, a personal lawyer for Trump, told the Journal that the RedFinch reimbursement showed that Cohen — who has since had a falling out with Trump — is a thief.

Cohen has pleaded guilty to campaign-finance violations, tax evasion, lying to Congress and other charges unrelated to the RedFinch payment. He was sentenced last month to three years in prison, and is scheduled to testify before Congress next month before he begins his sentence.

NATION

Kidnap suspect's lawyer doubts fair trial

By Todd Richmond
Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. — Defense attorneys for the man accused of kidnapping a Wisconsin teenager and killing her parents acknowledged Wednesday that they're starting the case at a disadvantage after their client gave detectives a detailed confession and said they're not sure he can get a fair trial in the state.

According to a criminal complaint, 21-year-old Jake Patterson outlined in detail for detectives how he gunned down 13-year-old Jayme Closs' parents Oct. 15 in their home near Barron and abducted the girl. Jayme escaped last week from the remote cabin where Patterson had been hiding her. Patterson was arrested minutes later, and he was charged Monday with two counts of homicide and kidnapping.

Charlie Glynn and Richard Jones, Patterson's public defenders, told The Associated Press that they face an uphill struggle. Glynn acknowledged that the complaint contains "a very thorough confession."

Jones said the defense team will evaluate Patterson's statements to determine whether they were given voluntarily and if they're true. He cautioned that prosecutors have amassed 30 banker's boxes full of evidence, but that the defense likely won't receive any of it, let alone review it, until after Patterson's Feb. 6 preliminary hearing.

Terry Sullivan, a Chicago attorney who prosecuted the John Wayne Gacy killings, said he wouldn't have included so many details in the Patterson complaint.

"I'm befuddled as to why they would release this amount of their evidence," Sullivan said. "It doesn't take a lot to hold a defendant, especially on a case like this. This guy certainly doesn't deserve any sympathy but, under our laws and our constitution, he at least deserves a fair trial. How do you get one if all the jurors have read this?"

Jones said he doubts Patterson can get a fair trial in Barron County or maybe anywhere in Wisconsin, given the publicity surrounding the case.

Barron, which lies about 90 miles northeast of Minneapolis, is home to about 3,400 people. Investigators took more than 3,500 tips during the three-month search for Jayme. Some 2,000 people participated in a ground search for her on Oct. 23.

They said they understand everyone wants to know Patterson's motivation, and that it will become clear later as the legal proceedings continue, Jones said.

The attorneys declined to comment on Patterson's mental health.

Patterson's father, Patrick Patterson, visited the Barron County Justice Center on Tuesday, saying he wanted to pass a note to the Closs' family, CNN reported. On the verge of tears, Patrick Patterson declined an interview but said: "All I care about right now is Jayme's family."

Barron County Sheriff Chris Fitzgerald told the AP he had no knowledge of a note from the Patterson family.

Glynn and Jones described Patrick Patterson as a genuinely kind man who feels terrible. They said he didn't know what was going on, even though his son told detectives Jayme was trapped beneath his bed during several visits from his father.

Jayme's grandfather, Robert Naiberg, said Wednesday that he appreciates the father's sympathy.

"You can't blame the parents," Naiberg told the AP. "A guy becomes 21 years old, and sometimes it's not how he was raised or anything."

Naiberg said his granddaughter continues to recover. He said she will permanently live with her aunt and wants to return to school eventually.

"She doesn't want to talk to anybody … (but her aunt is) bringing her out of her shell slowly," Naiberg said of Jayme.

Woman collects federal benefits for fake child

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — A military widow has been sentenced to 14 months in prison for falsely claiming to have a son so she could collect more than $100,000 in veterans and Social Security benefits, federal prosecutors say.

The News & Observer of Raleigh reported a federal indictment accused 61-year-old Elizabeth Hayes Cox of stealing more than $68,000 in Social Security money and another $44,000 from the Department of Veterans Affairs between 2000 and 2017 on behalf of a fictitious son.

Prosecutors said Wednesday that Cox had married a disabled veteran while he was in prison and presented a fraudulent birth certificate to receive payments for their made-up dependent child named Oliver.

U.S. District Court Judge Terrence Boyle focused his questions on Cox's relationship history, which includes a husband who was slain and a boyfriend lost to suicide.

Her husband, Randall Cox, was shot in the head at home in High Point in 2006, according to testimony. The case remains unsolved. Cox said her boyfriend killed himself in the home they shared in 2014. Cox told Boyle she found him in the kitchen.

Boyle ordered Cox to report to federal prison by the end of February and pay $113,000 restitution.

Will Lester, The (Anaheim, Calif.) Orange County Register/AP

Crews work to clear the roadway after a multi-vehicle collision along a foggy Interstate 15 in the Cajon Pass near Hesperia, Calif., on Wednesday.

Email prompts man to attend a stranger's bachelor party

By Lisa Rathke
Associated Press

MONTPELIER, Vt. — An email about a bachelor party sent to the wrong person has led to an Arizona man taking a trip to a Vermont ski resort to attend the party of someone he doesn't know this weekend.

William Novak of Phoenix got the email on Jan. 7 about the ski weekend for Angelo. He didn't know the person but the party with its over-the-top invitation sounded like a good time so he emailed back as a joke to say he was in. Novak, 35, about the same age as the others invited, expected to get no response or one recognizing his humor. Instead, the party-goers from New Jersey and New York agreed that Novak should join the fun.

"When they wrote back and they were like 'if you're serious, we're serious, get here' I was blown away.'" he said.

Likewise, Angelo Onello's brother, who sent the email, appreciated his humor.

"It started as a joke and ended up being probably a good mistake," said Devin Onello, who said he and Novak have hit it off ever since.

Novak, a father of a 10-month-old who with his wife has spent much of their savings on renovating their old house, had a hard time rationalizing spending $750 on airfare, ski rentals and lift passes so he started a GoFundMe page with the heading, "Help me go to the bachelor party of a stranger." By the time he and his family had eaten dinner that day, his trip was funded.

Calif. takes big hit in latest storm

By Paul Elias and John Antczak
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — The latest in a series of Pacific Ocean storms pounded California with rain and snow Thursday, prompting officials to put communities on alert for mudslides and flooding and making travel treacherous.

Runoff flowed from the San Francisco Bay Area to the Sierra Nevada foothills and from Central Coast counties to Los Angeles and the inland region to the east.

Blizzard conditions blanketed the higher elevations of the Sierra Nevada with snow while high surf rolled ashore along the coast.

Concern was high in communities near burn scars of recent wildfires.

The Santa Barbara County community of Montecito that was devastated by deadly debris flow a year ago received 1.5 inches of rain in 24 hours but had so far avoided a repeat of the disaster.

A flash flood watch was in effect for the area burned by the wildfire that obliterated the Northern California town of Paradise in November.

Areas under evacuation orders included parts of fire-scarred Malibu, where all public schools were closed. Several vital canyon roads in the area were closed due rock fall danger.

At least five deaths have been reported during the week of stormy weather.

Three people, including a 1-year-old girl, were killed Tuesday when a car went out of control Tuesday during heavy rain in El Dorado County, the San Francisco Chronicle newspaper reported.

Wednesday saw toppled trees, snarled roads and downed power lines all around Northern California, sometimes with deadly consequences.

A homeless man who may have been trying to shelter under some trees near an Oakland freeway was killed when the tree toppled and he was crushed by a 30-foot-long branch, authorities said.

Tens of thousands of people were without electricity in Pacific Gas & Electric utility areas, including more than 15,000 in San Jose late Wednesday night.

The weather service issued a high surf warning for San Francisco County through Friday, with 30-foot breakers along the coast of the North Bay, Monterey Bay and Big Sur.

Rain and winds forced the cancellation of more than 140 flights at San Francisco International Airport.

In Southern California, fog on a mountain highway triggered a 19-vehicle crash. Thirty-five people were evaluated for injuries after the pileup on Interstate 15 in Cajon Pass, the San Bernardino County Fire Department said.

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NATION

Pa. town a haven for white supremacists

By Gabriel Pogrund
The Washington Post

ULYSSES, Pa. — The traffic sign that greets visitors on the south side of Ulysses, a tiny town in rural far north-central Pennsylvania, is suitably quaint — a silhouette of a horse-drawn cart reminding drivers that the Amish use the roads, too. But on the north side of town, along the main thoroughfare, is a far different display: a home dedicated to Adolf Hitler, where star-spangled banners and Nazi flags flutter side by side and wooden swastikas stand on poles.

White supremacy has had a continuous presence in Ulysses and surrounding Potter County since the Ku Klux Klan arrived a century ago, giving the town — with a population today of about 650 — improbable national significance. In the mid-2000s, it hosted the World Aryan Congress, a gathering of neo-Nazis, skinheads and Klan members.

Last year, after a sting operation, federal prosecutors charged six members of an Aryan Strike Force cell with weapons and drug offenses, contending that they had plotted a suicide attack at an anti-racist protest. A terminally ill member was willing to hide a bomb in his oxygen tank and to blow himself up, prosecutors said. The group had met and conducted weapons training in Ulysses.

Neo-Nazis and their opponents here say that white extremists have grown more confident — and confrontational — since the rise of Donald Trump. Two months before the 2016 presidential election, the KKK established a "24 hour Klan Line" and sent goody bags containing lollipops and fliers to hundreds of homes. "You can sleep tonight knowing the Klan is awake," the message read. A regional newspaper ran Klan advertisements saying, "God bless the KKK."

Local police said the group had not recruited openly in years.

Two weeks later, the area's two neo-Nazi groups, the National Socialist Movement and Aryan Strike Force, held a "white unity meeting" in Ulysses to discuss their response to Trump and to plan joint action. One organizer would not say when the groups had met last, simply commenting, "It's just a good time."

Potter County is staunchly Republican and has voted Democratic once since 1888; Trump received 80 percent of the vote, tying with Herbert Hoover for the highest percentage won.

"I can tell you with certainty that since November 2016, activity has doubled, whether it's feet on the street or money orders or people helping out," said Daniel Burnside, 43, a woodcarver who owns the Nazi-themed home and directs the state chapter of the National Socialist Movement, a far-right group that was founded in Detroit in the mid-1970s. It has a presence in many states, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center, which tracks extremist groups, and the NSM was among the groups taking part in the violent August 2017 rally in defense of Confederate statues in Charlottesville, Va.

"We have meetings every 30 days," he said. " There's more collaboration."

'Still a white nation'

Burnside, who declined to say how many local residents were involved in his group, was born in Ulysses and was raised there by a grandfather who he said was a Nazi sympathizer who fought in the U.S. Army in Europe during World War II. Burnside said his beloved grandfather drank himself to death because of the war's impact on him.

The younger Burnside said he joined NSM four years ago but has long harbored anti-Semitic views and is a practicing Odinist — the pagan religion Odinism is popular among some neo-Nazis. Burnside does not see Trump as a leader of the NSM cause but as a politician who amplified long-standing white-nationalist views at the right time.

"Personally, I don't know about Trump," he said. "You won't necessarily see MAGA hats at an NSM meeting. We're anti-Semitic. Something's off about Trump with the Jews. That said, we're strategically aligned. When Trump says something that aligns with us — close the borders, build the wall, look after your own — that's good. We've been saying this for 25 years, but he has made it mainstream."

"We're still a white nation, and I respect that he supports that," Burnside added. "He's also highlighted social problems. The kids who go to bed hungry, people who can't pay their bills, the damage being done to society."

Joe Leschner, 38, a white restaurant manager, fled the county last year because of what he said was abuse aimed at him and his wife, Sashena, who is black, after Trump's election.

After he discovered a KKK leaflet outside their home, Leschner organized an anti-racism gathering in Ulysses. "And these guys drove by us and gave the gun signal, like they're gonna shoot us," he said.

One of those who Leschner said made a pistol gesture had been jailed previously for 10 years for an aggravated assault on a black man. Last year, he was convicted of possession of firearms he was not legally allowed to own and of having intent to sell drugs.

Photographs of the Leschners were circulated on VK, a Russian-run social media site, with users posting death threats, he said.

"A guy came up to us in a restaurant and said, 'You have got to be kidding me.' I wanted to say something, but just couldn't. This was where I grew up, at the restaurant where I got my first job. My wife was almost in tears," he recalled.

"We had to leave," said Leschner, who now runs a restaurant in Frederick, Md. "Most people aren't racist, but there are enough that are and enough who let it happen."

'Right conditions to thrive'

Kathleen Blee, who is a University of Pittsburgh sociology professor and an expert on white extremism, said Ulysses came to be a nexus of such thinking as like-minded residents gravitated to one another.

"Modern white extremism is different to the KKK in the 1920s or Nazi Germany in that it is exclusively produced through small networks. It is not a mass movement," she said. "It's just one person recruiting another. Somebody knowing somebody. … You get an extremist in an area, they attract other extremists."

Ulysses' most famous resident may have been August Kreis III, 63, a neo-Nazi from New Jersey who moved to town in the 1990s and left about 10 years ago. Kreis made Ulysses the national headquarters of the Aryan Nations group and organized events such as the Aryan World Congress. In 2015, he was sentenced to 50 years in prison on a child-molestation conviction.

Photos by Brett Carlsen/For The Washington Post

The home of Daniel Burnside in Ulysses, Pa., displays Nazi and other white-supremacist symbology. NSM stands for the National Socialist Movement. The slogan "Free Tommy Robinson" refers to a British far-right figure jailed by a British judge in May for contempt of court.

Daniel Burnside is a woodcarver and a regional leader in the white-supremacist National Socialist Movement.

Pennsylvania has 36 racial hate groups, more than Alabama, Arkansas or Kansas, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center.

"This area is well known for white supremacy. It's got a rich history and the right conditions to thrive," said Heidi Beirich of the SPLC. "It's as significant as many areas in the South usually associated with white supremacy."

Rural Appalachia, which includes Ulysses' Potter County, has a wary attitude to outside forces — especially the state — that is often cited as a reason that anti-government militia groups and white extremists have prospered here. "There is also an extreme mind-your-own-business approach and a belief in individual rights," Blee said.

'A laid-back town'

Months before the Leschners fled the area, another controversy erupted after a sheriff's deputy from a neighboring county entered Burnside's front yard and confiscated a Nazi flag. Burnside called his local police force, demanding that the deputy return the flag and record a video apology. When that did not happen, he went to state police and pursued a theft case. The 23-year-old deputy was forced to return the flag and to pay damages. Local police confirmed that he was suspended and left his position shortly after the trial's conclusion.

Many locals suggested that they were more upset by the deputy's actions than by the neo-Nazism. One man, an Army veteran who spoke on the condition of anonymity out of fear of being branded a racist, said there was no comparison between World War II Nazis and Ulysses residents.

"World War II was a totally different time period. It's part of history," he said. "He can do what he wants. … Everyone has their own thing."

One day recently, Burnside, accompanied by a reporter, drove around town dressed in a shirt featuring Hitler's face as the main design. None of the locals he chatted with objected to his attire.

City council president Roy Hunt insisted that this reflected the town's generous spirit.

"We're a laid-back town, and we're gonna be nice to everybody," Hunt said. "I've known Danny for twenty years. If you were in town and you walked around with him, you're right, he'll be welcome in every store. … If you're nice, people will be nice to you 98 percent of the time."

"If he were to put something up that said kill all members of a race, in my opinion, that would be crossing the line, but he doesn't have that sign up," Hunt said.

Burnside said he serves the community. "I do fundraisers for American Legion with my artwork. Boys and Girls Clubs, regardless of race or ethnicity, I do fundraisers. … The only way I can help white people is by helping everyone."

Other residents disagree about the impact of the white supremacists' presence. As he shopped among Burnside's carved wooden bears and eagle sculptures, some of them signed with a swastika, Tom Lee, a road construction manager, said that he supports the First Amendment and that the Nazi presence "ain't nothing to do with me. It's a free country."

"After a while, you're not what you were anymore," he added. "It is America out here, but not in the inner cities anymore."

William Fish, 72, a carpenter, recalled as a child accompanying his mother as she delivered blankets and shoes to the shacks where black field workers lived.

"We're not a racist town, but there are people who will turn a blind eye when they see racism happening. That's why we have this history," he said. "I think it has got worse since Trump, I honestly do. I also think our young people do not today share the same rotten values as older people."

Belinda Empson, 59, said it pained her that veterans in the Memorial Day parade had to march past Nazi signs.

"My grandson is 8 years old and he's already asking about the Nazi flags," said Empson, a retired waitress. "And I don't want to explain to my grandson what it means, what they're about. We should have settled this stuff years ago."

NATION

A LABOR OF LOVE

Women look to return WWII letters to families

BY ROGER DUPUIS
(Wilkes-Barre, Pa.) Times Leader

GLEN LYON, Pa. — Nearly 80 years ago, residents of Glen Lyon, Pa., and surrounding areas joined millions of Americans in mobilizing to fight for our country and save democracy.

Today, two dedicated women are fighting to keep a special part of their legacy alive, and looking to get treasured family mementoes into the hands of loved ones.

Friends Lorrie Materewicz and Sally Billings have become the custodians of hundreds of letters and postcards mailed home from around the globe during World War II.

The largest Catholic church in Newport Township, St. Adalbert's Parish, formed a "Service Club" to send the weekly church bulletins, monthly township newsletters telling of current events such as births, deaths, marriages, local sports teams' scores, local news and care packages consisting of candy, shoeshine kits, hygiene items, socks and other gifts to the servicemen and women of the parish.

In response, those on the front lines sent letters and postcards back to the church. They were lovingly placed in scrapbooks, where they lay undisturbed for decades.

St. Adalbert's is now part of Holy Spirit Parish.

"In 2005 or 2006, I was in the balcony with our pastor looking for Christmas decorations and I came across these," Materewicz said.

"I started leafing through them, realized what they were and I asked him if we could have them, and he said yes," she said."Raising a young child at the time, I put them in my study and didn't look at them for years. In purging the study a few years ago, I came across them again and really started delving into them."

Among the letters were dispatches home from her father, Sylvester Materewicz, and her uncle, Felix Materewicz.

"I just was overwhelmed. I just couldn't control my emotions," she said. "And I thought that if anybody else could feel like this, getting letters from a relative, we need to get them back."

So she and Billings made up a list of everybody's name — it took work, as the letters had been saved chronologically, not alphabetically. They put the list in the back of the parish and also had it published in the township newsletter.

"Requests started pouring in," Materewicz said.

The women, who are both members of American Legion Auxiliary Unit 539, keep photocopies of each item to save them for the local legion's history. They are preserved as part of Post 539's Veterans' Memorial Gallery located in the Post home's banquet hall.

Materewicz has served as commander and president, while Billings is auxiliary secretary/treasurer.

The pair very much want to see as many letters reach family members as possible.

"We've given away over 300 pieces of correspondence to over 120 families so far," Materewicz said. There were probably 700 total, Billings added, which means many more remain to be claimed.

"And they only go to family members," said Billings, who keeps a list of who the originals were sent to. "Everything is documented."

PHOTOS BY BILL TARUTIS, THE (WILKES-BARRE, PA.) TIMES NEW LEADER/AP

A U.S. Navy postmark dated Dec. 14, 1944, appears on a 6-cent airmail stamp on a letter sent during World War II.

Left: Sally Billings, left, and Lorrie Materewicz sift through hundreds of unclaimed letters in Lee, Pa., from World War II soldiers to their families discovered in scrapbooks at St. Adalbert's Church, now Holy Spirit Parish, in Glen Lyon, Pa. Above: A victory mail, or V-mail, letter written by Cpl. Sylvester Materewicz is dated Nov. 13, 1944. Victory mail was sent in microfiche and censored before being printed for delivery.

WORLD

Ben Curtis/AP

Mourners bury the body of Abdalla Dahir near to the grave of his colleague Feisal Ahmed at their funerals in Nairobi, Kenya on Wednesday. Both were killed in Tuesday's attack.

Kenya hunting for explosives in wake of deadly hotel attack

By Christopher Torchia
Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya — Kenyan bomb disposal experts on Thursday searched for explosives left over from the extremist attack on a Nairobi luxury hotel complex in which 21 people, plus five attackers, were killed.

The Kenyan government said its quick reaction to Tuesday's assault on the DusitD2 complex reflected improvements in its ability to respond to such brazen assaults on civilian targets. It was "much better handled" in comparison to the 2013 attack on the nearby Westgate Mall, said Joseph Mucheru, the information minister. Police took hours to respond to that attack, leading to reforms.

"The speed, the response and the conclusion of this matter was swift," the minister told journalists.

The al-Qaida-linked al-Shabab extremist group, which carried out the 2013 attack that killed 67 people, has claimed responsibility for the hotel assault.

The Kenya Red Cross said no one appeared to be missing after scores of cases had been "closed positively." Some family members had struggled to locate relatives, some of whom fled the complex without phones and other belongings.

President Uhuru Kenyatta on Wednesday declared that the security operation to retake the complex was over, around 20 hours after the attack started.

With the attack, al-Shabab showed it can still strike despite heavy pressure by U.S., Somali and African Union forces against its strongholds in neighboring Somalia.

While U.S. airstrikes have degraded al-Shabab's ability to operate by keeping its fighters on the run, it is still capable of carrying out spectacular acts of violence in retaliation for Kenya sending troops to Somalia to fight it. The Islamic extremist group also carried out the assault on Kenya's Garissa University in 2015 that claimed 147 lives, mostly students.

This week's bloodshed in Kenya's capital appeared designed to inflict maximum damage to the country's image of stability and its tourism industry, an important source of revenue.

Mucheru, however, said he had been impressed by Kenyans who posted images highlighting wildlife and other Kenyan attractions on social media in reaction to the attack.

Britain's May battles to keep Brexit on track

By Jill Lawless and Gregory Katz
Associated Press

LONDON — British Prime Minister Theresa May was consulting opposition parties and other lawmakers Thursday in a battle to put Brexit back on track after surviving a no-confidence vote, though there was little immediate sign of a breakthrough from talks branded a "stunt" by the main opposition leader.

European Union countries were stepping up preparations for a disorderly British exit on March 29 after the U.K. Parliament rejected May's Brexit withdrawal deal with the bloc.

Lawmakers threw out the deal Tuesday, in a crushing defeat for May, who suffered the worst parliamentary defeat in modern British history.

The drubbing was followed by a no-confidence vote in the government, but May's minority Conservative government survived it on Wednesday night with backing from its Northern Irish ally, the Democratic Unionist Party.

May said she would hold talks "in a constructive spirit" with leaders of opposition parties and other lawmakers in a bid to find a way forward for Britain's EU exit.

The government confirmed that May will meet a Monday deadline to publish a Plan B and that lawmakers will have a full day to debate it — and, crucially, amend it — on Jan. 29.

There was little sign of a breakthrough in uniting Parliament's feuding Brexit factions, whose conflicting demands range from a postponement of Britain's departure date to a new referendum on whether to leave the EU or remain.

Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the main opposition Labour Party, said he wouldn't meet with May until she took a no-deal Brexit "off the table."

"To get a deal that can command a majority in Parliament, Theresa May has to ditch the red lines and get serious about proposals for the future," Corbyn said during a speech to supporters in the English seaside town of Hastings.

"Last night's offer of talks with party leaders turned out to be simply a stunt, not the serious attempt to engage with the new reality that's needed," he said.

Green Party lawmaker Caroline Lucas, who met with May on Thursday morning, said the prime minister was "in a fantasy world" if she thought the deal could be transformed by Monday.

"Parliament is gridlocked," she said.

May so far has shown little inclination to make major changes to her deal or lift her insistence that Brexit means leaving the EU's single market and customs union. Many lawmakers think a softer departure that retained single market or customs union membership is the only plan capable of winning a majority in Parliament. They fear the alternative is an abrupt "no-deal" withdrawal from the bloc, which businesses and economists fear would cause turmoil.

Iranian newspapers, minister criticize US arrest of newscaster

By Jon Gambrell
Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Iran kept up its criticism Thursday of the FBI's apparent arrest of an American anchorwoman from Iran's state-run English-language TV channel, with its foreign minister saying "she's done nothing but journalism."

The hard-line Vatan-e Emrooz paper criticized the detention of Press TV's Marzieh Hashemi as "Saudi-style behavior with a critical journalist." That's a reference to the Oct. 2 assassination of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul.

Meanwhile, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told Press TV that "we have a right to continue to look after her interests" as Hashemi, born Melanie Franklin in New Orleans, also hold Iranian citizenship.

Iranian law, however, does not recognize dual nationalities, an issue that comes up in its arrest of those with Western ties.

"She is a famous journalist, she's done nothing but journalism," Zarif told the broadcaster from a visit to Iraq. "The arrest of Ms. Hashemi is a very clear affront to freedom of expression, political abuse of an innocent individual and I believe the United States should release her immediately without further delay."

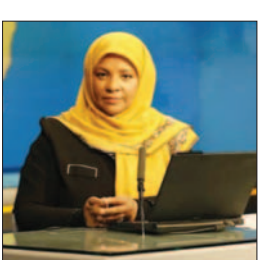
Hashemi was detained Sunday in St. Louis, where she had filmed a Black Lives Matter documentary after visiting relatives in the New Orleans area. She was then taken to Washington by the FBI on a material witness warrant, according to her elder son, Hossein Hashemi.

The FBI said in an email that it had no comment.

"We still have no idea what's going on," said Hashemi, a research fellow at the University of Colorado who was interviewed by phone from Washington. He also said he and his siblings had been subpoenaed to appear before a grand jury.

The incident comes as Iran faces increasing criticism of its own arrests of dual citizens and other people with Western ties. Those cases have previously been used as bargaining chips in negotiations with world powers.

Federal law allows judges to order witnesses to be arrested and detained if the government can prove their testimony has extraordinary value for a criminal case and that they would be a flight risk and unlikely to respond to a subpoena. The statute generally requires those witnesses to be promptly released once they are deposed.



Courtesy of Press TV/AP

American-born news anchor Marzieh Hashemi at studio in Tehran, Iran.

WORLD

Migrants set sights on Mexico

By Sonia Perez D.
Associated Press

AGUA CALIENTE, Guatemala — More than 1,700 Hondurans were walking and hitchhiking through Guatemala on Wednesday, heading toward the Mexico border as part of a new caravan of migrants hoping to reach the United States.

Over 1,700 migrants passed through the Agua Caliente border crossing under the watchful eyes of about 200 police and soldiers. Some migrants told The Associated Press that they crossed informally elsewhere.

Guatemala's National Immigration Institute said there were 325 children or youths under 18 in the caravan. There were also just over 100 people from El Salvador.

Miria Zelaya, who left the Honduran city of Colon and was traveling with 12 relatives, said she did not know what sort of work she hopes to find in the United States but was not dismayed by tougher immigration policies under President Donald Trump.

"That does not discourage me," Zelaya said. "The need is greater."

Migrants leaving Central America's Northern Triangle nations of Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala routinely cite widespread poverty, lack of opportunity and rampant gang violence as their motivation.

Many in the group registered for 90-day visas in Guatemala, saying they felt it would offer peace of mind on the 300-mile trek to Mexico's southern border.

Hector Alvarado, a 25-year-old announcer, said he had been shut out of job opportunities for belonging to the political opposition and felt forced to leave to find work. He learned about the caravan on Facebook, said goodbye to relatives and hit the road.

"My loved ones have already cried over of my leaving," Alvarado said. "Now I have to press on."

The latest trek north comes as Trump has been working to convince the American public that there is a crisis at the southern border to justify construction of his long-promised border wall. Trump's demand for billions of dollars to that end has resulted in a standoff with Congress that has forced a partial government shutdown.

The fate that awaits the migrants at the Mexico-U.S. border is uncertain. Previous caravans that were seized upon last year by Trump in the run-up to the 2018 midterm election have quietly dwindled, with many having gone home to Central America or put down roots in Mexico. Many others — nearly half, according to U.S. Border Patrol arrest records — have sought to enter the U.S. illegally.

About 6,000 Central Americans reached Tijuana in November amid conflict on both sides of the border over their presence in the Mexican city across from San Diego. As of earlier this week, fewer than 700 remained at a former outdoor concert venue in Tijuana that the Mexican government set up as a shelter to house them.

Mexico has issued humanitarian visas to about 2,900 migrants from last fall's caravan, many of whom are now working legally there with visas.

Also Wednesday about 100 migrants set out as a group from the capital of El Salvador, hoping to join the larger group from Honduras. Their numbers represent less than a third of the estimated 350 migrants who leave El Salvador each day.

Salvador Melendez/AP

Migrants group begin their journey toward the U.S. border as they walk along a highway in San Salvador, El Salvador, on Wednesday.

Paraguayan firefighters pose naked to raise funds

By Jorge Saenz
and Emilio Sanabria
Associated Press

SAN ROQUE GONZALEZ, Paraguay — Fatima Olmedo was first to pose naked for the calendar, holding a rolled-up hose in her hands that barely covered her pregnant belly.

Other volunteer firefighters then followed. There's Jorge Leiva, who used a chain saw to cover the area south of his navel and north of his knees. And Daniel Rodriguez who proudly dropped his suspender trousers all the way to his rubber boots.

The caption at the bottom of every photograph reads: "I've stripped for this image because that's how the State keeps us: buck naked."

Month-by-month, they bare it all in photos to raise money and demand resources from the government for their station in this small city on the outskirts of Paraguay's capital.

"We're protesting like this because that's how we're working: We're practically naked," said Fire Chief Alcides Britez, who is pictured in the November page smiling as he climbs up a red fire engine wearing nothing but a helmet.

"The firefighters at the San Roque Gonzalez station lack health insurance, which puts us at risk all the time," said Britez, who is also an ambulance driver at the local health center.

Other members of the department juggle firefighting duties with jobs as teachers, journalists or plumbers. Some attend nursing school or are finishing a law degree.

"My earnings come from the appreciation and the gratitude of people," volunteer firefighter Silvia Britez said. "That's worth much more than any salary."

But the firefighters struggle to keep up with the costs, often using their own money to buy protective gloves. The station gets about $600 a month to serve the 16,000 residents of San Roque Gonzalez. But firefighters say that fuel and maintenance of the equipment, which includes an ambulance and a fire engine donated by Spain, costs about $1,000 a month.

The idea for the calendar arose during a photography class taught by Spanish photographer Jose Maria Guerrero.

"I have several students who are volunteer firefighters, and the idea came about when we were discussing the movie 'The Full Monty,'" he said, referring to the British comedy about a group of men who form a strip troupe.

"It's a process that lasted about six months. First, I had to convince them that there's nothing wrong with posing naked for a photo. This is a small town made up of mostly farmers, and not given to sudden changes," Guerrero said.

Since its recent publication, though, the calendar has spread like wildfire in the socially conservative South American nation.

"There are some people who are not in favor of this. … They're closed-minded. But they're just a few," said Britez. "Most people agreed with this. They liked it. They support us."

Jorge Saenz/AP

Firefighter Fatima Olmedo holds her two-month-old baby, Samara, as her husband holds a calendar page with a photo Olmedo posing nude while pregnant, in Asuncion, Paraguay.

Facebook removes hundreds of accounts

LONDON — Facebook says it has removed hundreds of Russia-linked pages, groups and accounts that it says were part of two big disinformation operations, in its latest effort to fight fake news.

The social media company said Thursday it took action after finding two networks "that engaged in coordinated inauthentic behavior" on its Facebook and Instagram platforms.

Facebook's head of cybersecurity policy, Nathaniel Gleicher, said in a blog post that one network operated in countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the other focused on Ukraine.

The people running the accounts represented themselves as independent news sources and posted on topics like anti-NATO sentiment and protest movements.

Snowed-in Austrian nuns insist they're staying put

BERLIN — Authorities in Austria are trying to reach dozens of Catholic nuns whose Alpine monastery has been cut off from the world for days because of heavy snowfall.

But public broadcaster ORF reported Thursday that the nuns say they've got enough food and fuel, and want to stay put.

The Marienparadies cloister, about 31 miles south of Salzburg, is home to 30 nuns and one priest.

ORF reported that authorities have deployed heavy equipment to clear snow and fallen trees blocking the road to the monastery run by the "Sisters of Bethlehem" order.

It quoted prioress, Sister Laure-Marie, saying that the nuns had considered leaving but "since the sun returned and the road will be clear again soon, we are very, very grateful we're allowed to remain with God."

US alarmed by reports of Zimbabwe unrest

HARARE, Zimbabwe — The U.S. Embassy in Zimbabwe said Thursday it is "alarmed" by credible reports that security forces are targeting and beating activists and labor leaders after a local doctors' rights group said it had treated 68 gunshot cases and scores of other cases of assault.

The U.S. also urged Zimbabwe's government to restore access to social media as the country faces its worst unrest since deadly post-election violence in August. Zimbabweans this week heeded a nationwide stay-at-home call after the government dramatically increased fuel prices, making gasoline in the economically shattered country the world's most expensive.

Hungry residents of the capital, Harare, on Wednesday reported being tear-gassed by police as they ventured out to seek food. "Are we at war?" one resident asked. The city was quiet on Thursday as people stayed home, with schools and many shops closed and soldiers controlling long lines at the few gas stations open.

From The Associated Press

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AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man accused of luring victim via dating app

IL ST. CHARLES — A suburban Chicago man faces charges accusing him of robbing someone he lured through a dating app.

The Kane County state's attorney's office said in a Tuesday statement that Steven L. Ward Jr., 19, of Elgin, stole his victim's cellphone after saying he was armed and displaying a BB pistol. The statement doesn't identify the dating app used to arrange the meeting for Jan. 9.

Ward is charged with felony robbery and, if convicted, could face between four and 15 years in prison. Probation could also be an option. Ward appeared in Kane County bond court last week and the judge set his bail at $50,000. Tuesday's statement said Ward remains jailed.

Big cabbage brings college cash for child

MS MOSS POINT — An elementary school student in has earned a $1,000 scholarship for growing a massive cabbage.

Rayne Byron told WLOX-TV that she planted the cabbage in a tire and just kept fertilizing and watering the plant.

The cabbage finally weighed in at 23 pounds. That's about 10 times larger than many cabbages.

Rayne is a student at East Central Upper Elementary in Moss Point. She was the Mississippi winner in the Bonnie Plants Cabbage Program , which encourages third-graders to grow the plants.

Chocolate spill creates sweet mess on highway

AZ FLAGSSTAFF — Authorities in northern Arizona had a sweet hot mess on their hands after a tank trucker's trailer detached from the truck and rolled on its side on slick pavement, spilling a river of liquid chocolate onto westbound lanes of Interstate 40.

The Arizona Daily Sun reported the wreck Monday about 11 miles east of Flagstaff required cleanup crews to pour most of the 40,000 gallons of chocolate into the highway median to lighten the damaged tanker so it could be towed away.

Police: woman posing in photo kills boyfriend

TX AUSTIN—Investigators said a woman is facing manslaughter charges after accidentally shooting her boyfriend when she pointed a rifle at him while posing for a photo.

Travis County jail records indicated Autumn King, 20, was being held Tuesday on a $200,000 bond.

Austin police said the shooting occurred at the couple's home on Dec. 23. Investigators alleged that King said she aimed the rifle her boyfriend, Eric Charles Allen, 26 ,as he held her cellphone and prepared to take a photo to post online. King said she accidentally fired.

THE CENSUS

610

This number of chickens a sanctuary for farm animals said it rescued from a farm in LaSalle, Colo. Luvin Arms, an Erie, Colo., animal sanctuary, said it found cannibalism, infections and fractured wings among the 36,000 chickens housed in three sheds at a farm in LaSalle. The rescues took place over six days.

ANDRE TEAGUE, BRISTOL HERALD COURIER/AP

Hoofing it down the highway

Will "Uncle Abe" Frost walks along State Street in Bristol, Tenn., with his 5-year-old Appaloosa horse, Luna, Tuesday afternoon as they travel to Abingdon, Va., from Mountain City, Tenn.

Police, FBI hunt for stolen Choate sculpture

NJ CHERRY HILL — A New Jersey police department is seeking the public's help in finding a 1930s sculpture that was stolen from an apartment in November.

The Courier Post reported the Cherry Hill Police Department announced Tuesday they're seeking a marble, unfinished bust of a Sudanese woman by the late sculptor Nathaniel Choate.

The department said the FBI has joined the investigation into the sculpture's disappearance.

They said it has "cultural heritage significance."

Choate was a well-known American painter and sculptor who died in New York in 1965 at age 65.

Choate often showcased his work at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia and at the National Academy of Design in New York City.

The artist's travels to Greece, Morocco and Sudan strongly influenced his work.

Girl's leg broken in room-cleaning dispute

MO CARTHAGE — Court records said a man broke his 5-year-old daughter's leg after becoming enraged that she hadn't cleaned her room.

Lance Breeding, 27, of Carthage, is jailed on $50,000 bond on charges of felony child abuse. No attorney is listed for him in online court records.

The Joplin Globe reported that his daughter was taken Friday to a hospital with a broken femur and extensive bruising. Charging documents said he told an officer that he spanked the girl because she hadn't cleaned her room. He later found that her room still wasn't clean and said he pushed her "gently," causing her to hit a dresser.

Toddler OK after tumbling from vehicle

MN MANKATO — Authorities in Minnesota said a 2-year-old child is OK after tumbling from the back seat of a moving vehicle while still strapped in a car seat.

Dash camera video captured the moment the car seat and toddler rolled out of the vehicle which was turning a corner on a street in Mankato and kept going Monday. Chad Cheddar Mock was driving behind the car, stopped his vehicle and ran to the child's aid.

Police: Man steals gas, kills gas station worker

NY HEMPSTEAD — Police said a driver hit and killed a gas station employee on Long Island while attempting to flee without paying for $22 in gas.

Nassau police said Cemal Dagdeviren, 59, of Levittown, was struck Monday morning at a Pit Stop in South Hempstead.

Detective Lt. Stephen Fitzpatrick said Dagdeviren tried to stop the vehicle from leaving, but the male driver intentionally ran him over. Dagdeviren was pronounced dead at a nearby hospital.

Police said the vehicle fled the scene, and it had no plate or registration. Officials have released surveillance footage of the vehicle and suspected driver, who they said tried to pay with a fake credit card before fleeing.

Eagle rescued from Sitka power pole

AK SITKA — Officials said an eagle is recovering after it became stranded on a power pole in downtown Sitka.

The Daily Sitka Sentinel reported the male eagle was taken to the Alaska Raptor Center after electric department linemen rescued it from the pole Sunday.

Center avian director Jen Cedarleaf said the raptor has been named Zappa and appears to be doing fine.

She said Zappa does not have any broken bones, but it's too early to tell if he was injured from contact with the power line.

Cedarleaf said Zappa is at least five years old, with a wingspan of about 6.5 feet.

From wire reports

Welcome to the neighborhood.

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BUSINESS/WEATHER

Advocates urge agency to regulate privacy issues

By Rachel Lerman and Tali Arbel
Associated Press

Consumer advocates and the data-hungry technology industry are drawing early battle lines in advance of an expected fight this year over what kind of federal privacy law the U.S. should have.

On Thursday, more than a dozen privacy organizations unveiled a plan that would create a new federal data-protection agency focused on regulating the way businesses and other organizations collect and make use of personal data, even if aggregated or anonymized. The proposal would sideline the Federal Trade Commission, which has limited powers and a mixed record of holding companies to account for privacy problems.

On the other side, a think tank backed by Google, Amazon, Microsoft and other major tech companies proposed changes that would still give the industry broad authority to collect and use customer data. The Information Technology and Innovation Foundation called for national legislation that would repeal and replace existing privacy laws with a "common set of protections" intended to encourage innovation while also quashing tougher state laws.

Unlike many industrialized nations, the U.S. has no overarching national law governing data collection and privacy. Instead, it has a patchwork of federal laws that protect specific types of data, such as consumer health and financial information and the personal data generated by younger children.

States have also started to pass their own tougher restrictions. A California measure set to take effect next year, for instance, will let consumers request the data collected from them and to opt out of future collection.

Calls for a national privacy law gained force after Facebook's Cambridge Analytica scandal last year, in which the social media giant was forced to admit that onetime political consultants for the 2016 Trump campaign had improperly accessed the personal information of as many as 87 million users.

Continuing revelations of data missteps at Facebook and other big tech companies have bolstered a U.S. reform movement. Its advocates take heart from recent developments in Europe, which last year enacted sweeping privacy regulations that, among other things, require companies to obtain permission before collecting most data. Several U.S. senators — including Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat, Brian Schatz, a Hawaii Democrat, and Marco Rubio, a Florida Republican — have already introduced draft privacy legislation.

"Privacy advocates are fed up with the FTC and with Washington failing to reign in the immense power the big data giants hold," said Jeffrey Chester, the executive director of the Center for Digital Democracy, which helped author the reform proposal.

Their proposal would set limits on what data companies can collect and would require firms to consider correcting or deleting personal data upon request. It would also prevent companies from giving customer data to the government unless criminal investigations necessitated it.

By contrast, the ITIF report calls for a "grand bargain" that would accept a national privacy law long opposed by industry. In the foundation's proposal, however, this law would establish "baseline" privacy protections across all industries — and would prevent states from enacting stronger measures.

"A lot of privacy activists are entrenched in creating ever more complicated rules," Daniel Castro, a co-author of the ITIF report's, said by email. "The only way to simplify these rules is to rewrite them."

Privacy experts say the baseline protections in the ITIF proposal still leave consumers at the mercy of big corporations. For instance, its "limited" consumer protections would require individuals to track the companies that collect their data in order to request access or corrections, rather than shifting that burden to companies themselves, said Eric Null, senior policy counsel at the New America think tank's Open Technology Institute.

The ITIF proposal would also prevent individual lawsuits against companies accused of misrepresenting or misusing their data, primarily to shield corporations from legal risk. Instead, only government would be empowered to protect individual rights. "A federal privacy law should include the power of a private individual to bring legal action," said Adam Schwartz, a lawyer with the Electronic Freedom Foundation, a digital-rights advocacy group.

ITIF's plan could start a conversation in Congress over repealing existing federal privacy laws, Null said, but several Democratic lawmakers strongly oppose that. "We should build upon — not dismantle — existing safeguards," said Sen. Ed Markey, a Massachusetts Democrat, in an emailed statement from his office.

Chris Hoofnagle, another privacy researcher at the University of California at Berkeley, called the ITIF offer "laughable," noting that it falls short of the voluntary privacy commitments companies such as Google, Microsoft and Amazon have already made.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro costs (Jan. 18)	$1.1693
Dollar buys (Jan. 18)	€0.8552
British pound (Jan. 18)	$1.32
Japanese yen (Jan. 18)	106.00
South Korean won (Jan. 18)	1,093.00
Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770
British pound	$1.7744
Canada (Dollar)	1.3301
China (Yuan)	6.7755
Denmark (Krone)	6.5557
Egypt (Pound)	17.9232
Euro	$1.1398/0.8773
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8438
Hungary (Forint)	280.50
Israel (Shekel)	3.6921
Japan (Yen)	108.95
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3032
Norway (Krone)	8.5523
Philippines (Peso)	52.57
Poland (Zloty)	3.76
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7514
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3564
South Korea (Won)	1,1124.47
Switzerland (Franc)	0.9939
Thailand (Baht)	31.73
Turkey (Lira)	5.3714

(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	5.50
Discount rate	3.00
Federal funds market rate	2.40
3-month bill	2.37
30-year bond	3.07

EUROPE GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel
Germany	$2.565	$2.926	$3.173	$3.242
Change in price	+0.2 cents	-0.2 cents	+0.1 cents	-3.7 cents
Netherlands	--	$3.290	$3.441	$3.644
Change in price	--	+11.4 cents	+10.9 cents	+10.4 cents
U.K.	--	$2.860	$3.107	$3.176
Change in price	--	-0.2 cents	+0.1 cents	-3.7 cents
Azores	--	--	$3.094	--
Change in price	--	--	+0.1 cents	--
Belgium	--	$2.499	$2.671	$2.887
Change in price	--	+1.3 cents	+1.7 cents	+3.6 cents
Turkey	--	--	$2.990	$3.059*
Change in price	--	--	+01. cents	-3.7 cents
Italy	$4.127	--	--	$4.354
Change in price	No change	--	--	+15.2 cents

PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Unleaded	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel
Japan	--	$2.959	--	$3.029
Change in price	--	No change	--	-3.0 cents
Okinawa	$2.299	--	--	$3.029
Change in price	+1.0 cents	--	--	-3.0 cents
South Korea	$2.329	--	$2.989	$3.059
Change in price	+2.0 cents	--	No change	-4.0 cents
Guam	$2.319**	$2.729	$2.979	--
Change in price	+1.0 cents	No change	No change	--

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For the week of Jan. 18 - 25

MARKET WATCH

Jan. 16, 2019

Dow Jones industrials	141.57	24,207.16
Nasdaq composite	10.86	7,034.69
Standard & Poor's 500	5.80	2,616.10
Russell 2000	9.48	1,454.70

WEATHER OUTLOOK

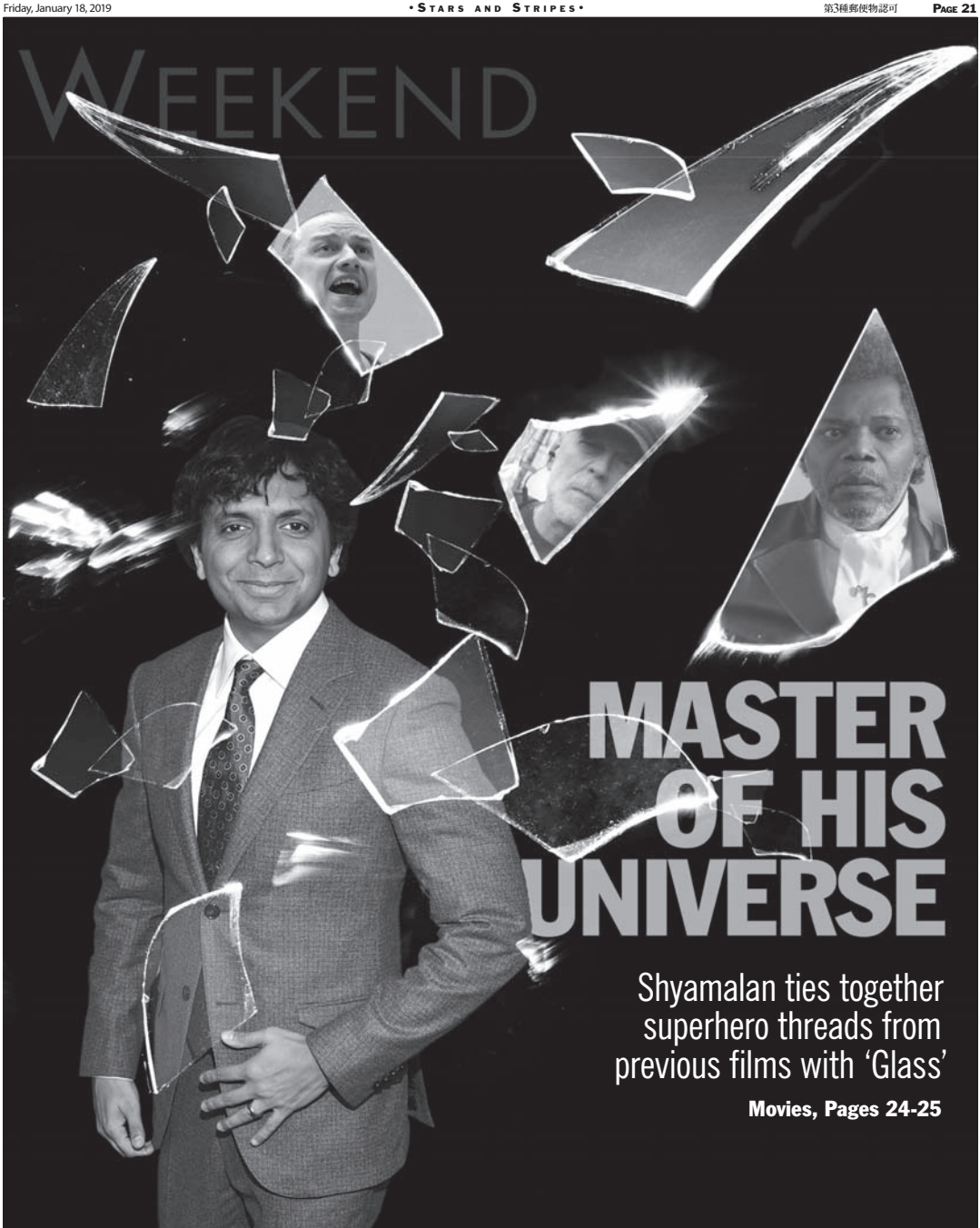
FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

FRIDAY IN EUROPE

SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC

The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

WEEKEND



MASTER OF HIS UNIVERSE

Shyamalan ties together superhero threads from previous films with 'Glass'

Movies, Pages 24-25

Video games — 26 Travel — 27-33 Music — 36-37 Fitness — 40 Crossword — 42

WEEKEND: GADGETS

PHOTOS BY PATRICK T. FALLON/Bloomberg

David Byron, industrial design manager of Sundberg-Ferar, introduces Hyundai's latest concept car Jan. 7 during the 2019 Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas.

Hyundai's automotive vision for the future: Walking cars

BY PETER HOLLEY
The Washington Post

When experts ponder the future of automobiles, they tend to focus on two novel modes of transportation: driverless cars and flying cars.

At this year's CES technology show in Las Vegas, Hyundai has introduced a third vision for how vehicles might traverse the world around them — one that doesn't rely solely on wheels.

More than 2,000 years after the wheelbarrow's debut in classical Greece, ushering in a new era of locomotion, Hyundai's latest concept car is designed to walk as easily as it rolls. Called "Elevate," the daddy-long-legs-like machine has wheels at the end of long robotic legs that would allow "users to drive, walk or even climb over the most treacherous terrain," according to the company.

The company — which labels the machine a UMV, or "ultimate mobility vehicle" — said the concept was inspired by the need for "resilient transportation" in disaster zones, where conventional vehicles are often rendered useless.

"When a tsunami or earthquake hits, current rescue vehicles can only deliver first responders to the edge of the debris field," John Suh, Hyundai vice president and head of Hyundai CRADLE, said in a statement on the company's website. "They have to go the rest of the way by foot. Elevate can drive to the scene and climb right over flood debris or crumbled concrete."

Suh added that the vehicle's usefulness wouldn't be limited to emergency situations. For people living with disabilities without access to an ADA ramp, the statement said, an autonomous version of the Elevate could walk to a front door and position itself so that a wheelchair could "roll right in."

How realistic is the Elevate concept?

David Bailey, a professor at Aston Business School in England, told the BBC that although concept cars might not make it to the factory floor, they can help generate valuable new ideas.

"For most of us, it's going to be wheels and roads, but in extreme situations there may be scope for this sort of thing," Bailey said. "There may well be applications in terms of emergency services — but there are very big technological challenges to make this sort of thing."

Hyundai's Elevate walking concept car is designed to walk as easily as it rolls.

Hyundai's vision is undeniably ambitious. The company said it envisions being able to switch out different Elevate body types for different situations. The vehicle is designed to utilize "both mammalian and reptilian walking gaits," giving it the ability to travel in any direction, the company said, noting that the legs fold up into a "stowed drive-mode" to save power.

Those legs, the company said, would be able to climb over a 5-foot wall and step across a 5-foot gap.

A concept video produced by Hyundai shows the vehicle performing a mixture of driving and walking. When the surface is relatively flat, the vehicle turns to conventional wheels, but when the terrain grows craggy, the vehicle's wheels appear to lock into place and its legs extend, taking synchronized steps forward.

When surrounded by massive chunks of concrete from what appears to be a collapsed structure, Elevate is shown leveling itself on an incline so that rescuers can load a stretcher inside.

"Imagine a car stranded in a snow ditch just 10 feet off the highway being able to walk or climb over the treacherous terrain, back to the road, potentially saving its injured passengers — this is the future of vehicular mobility," said David Byron, industrial design manager at Sundberg-Ferar, a Detroit-based design firm that partnered with Hyundai to create the Elevate.

ON THE COVER: M. Night Shyamalan brings characters from two previous films together in "Glass."

Illustration by Sean Moores/Stars and Stripes; images courtesy of Universal Pictures, AP and iStock

GADGET WATCH

LED mood lighting system simple, fun

BY GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

There are times when I spend just minutes with a new product. At other times, one will captivate my attention for hours. That was the case with Monster IlluminEssence color-changing LED mood lighting system.

The mood lighting kits are ready to use out of the box and will instantly get any room ready for a party, holiday dinner or anytime you want to feature adjustable mood lighting.

When I say I spent hours, this was not a case of the setup being difficult. In fact, it's incredibly easy to get set up in minutes. Everything is controlled by a handheld radio frequency remote control. This means there's no software, app or any download needed.

What took me so long is deciding which setup I liked and worked best.

The system is sold in parts, with light strips, bulbs and longer power extension cables, enabling it to work in rooms of any size. The bigger the room, the more you get.

The two-LED light mood kit ($19.88) has a pair of multicolor/white LED dimmable bulbs. These screw into any standard light fixture, and the setup is done. With the RF remote control (powered by two AAA batteries, not included), you can instantly turn the lights on or off, change the color of the light, control dimming, set up programs or use one of the preset programs. The programs include beach, Christmas and Halloween themes. Whatever you choose, the response is instant and kind of fun. Or just set it to "White" for everyday white light.

The USB-powered LED strip mood light kit ($28.88) has an extra bright multicolor/white dimmable 150-LED 16.4-foot strip and the RF remote. This is great for lining a wall behind a sofa or even the rim under furniture.

If you really want to go all out, according to Monster, you can pair up to four IlluminEssence remotes with up to 30 LED bulbs — or strips in each group — for the right light throughout your home.

Small space ($14.88) LED mood light kits have an RF remote, a single bulb and a 6.5-foot 60-LED strip. A large space kit ($28.88) has the remote with two bulbs and 2 strips.

Online: monsterstore.com

I have the Crayon, but not the 6th generation 9.7-inch iPad. So I borrowed my friend's to test **Logitech's digital pencil.**

While the name is Crayon, at a quick glance it resembles a metal pen without an ink tip.

The device hugely improves how well and precisely users can write notes and work in apps supported by Apple Pencil. This includes drawing, note taking and working with simple PDFs and Adobe Lightroom and CC.

An internal battery is charged with a lightning cable and will last for up to 75 hours. When it's inactive for 30 minutes, it automatically shuts off.

A feature I loved had nothing to do with its performance, rather its appearance. The 6.5-inch-long crayon is not rounded, which is really important to prevent it from rolling off your desk when not in use. Instead, the flat-sided feature keeps it in place.

Replacement tips and tip covers are available for purchase.

However you use the Crayon, it's sure to work perfectly without any delay or lag time. To adjust how thin or thick you want the Crayon to draw is simple to control; just tilt it while in use, and the tip will adjust to thick or thin.

There's no software or setup for the Crayon, just turn it on and a connection is made.

Online: logitech.com; $69.99

LOGITECH/TNS

Logitech's Crayon resembles a metal pen without an ink tip.

WEEKEND

CHECK IT OUT

Events, entertainment and other ways to fill your free time

1

TV show, game reflect Americans' obsession with their possessions

We Americans love our stuff. But as most of us know all too well, too much stuff leads to problems — and who doesn't have too much stuff?

Our obsession with possessions has bled over into our entertainment. Shows such as "Hoarders" and "Storage Wars" invite us to gawk in wonder at other people's stuff-accumulation problems.

"Tidying Up with Marie Kondo" aims to help people get a handle on their items in as kind and gentle a way as possible. The Japanese organization guru invites people to give thanks for their homes and possessions, and keep only that which "sparks joy."

Also following the theme of stuff accumulation is this week's video game, "Katamari Damacy REROLL." This remastered PlayStation 2 title, now on the Nintendo Switch, follows a little fellow called the Prince who is tasked by his father, who knocked the stars out of the sky, to roll up all the stuff he can find so that the King of all Cosmos can shoot it back up into space. A world full of objects awaits!

Nintendo

"Katamari Damacy REROLL"

- **More about 'Katamari Damacy REROLL' on Page 26.**
- **More about 'Tidying Up with Marie Kondo' on Page 39.**

Netflix

"Tidying Up with Marie Kondo"

2

TV show revels in internet's heyday

A true story of a rise and fall is hard to beat, and "Valley of the Boom" brings us just that in its tales of internet entrepreneurs and their idealistic crusades. Bradley Whitford ("The West Wing") plays the CEO of Netscape, a web browser shooting for world dominance. The six-part docudrama shows the start of the struggle we face today, drowning in data but often starving for wisdom.

- **The season premiere of 'Valley of the Boom' airs Saturday on AFN-Spectrum.**

Mahershala Ali's role spans 35 years in "True Detective."

3

'True Detective' great again with Ali

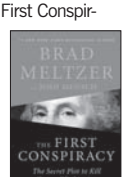
Academy Award-winner Mahershala Ali ("Moonlight") joins "True Detective" for its third season as a retired Arkansas state police detective who can't let go of a double kidnapping/murder case from 35 years earlier. Many viewers were disappointed in Season 2 of the gritty anthology, but early reviews suggest that, while slow-moving at times, the show makes a return to form.

- **Season 3 premiere of 'True Detective' airs Saturday on AFN-Spectrum.**

4

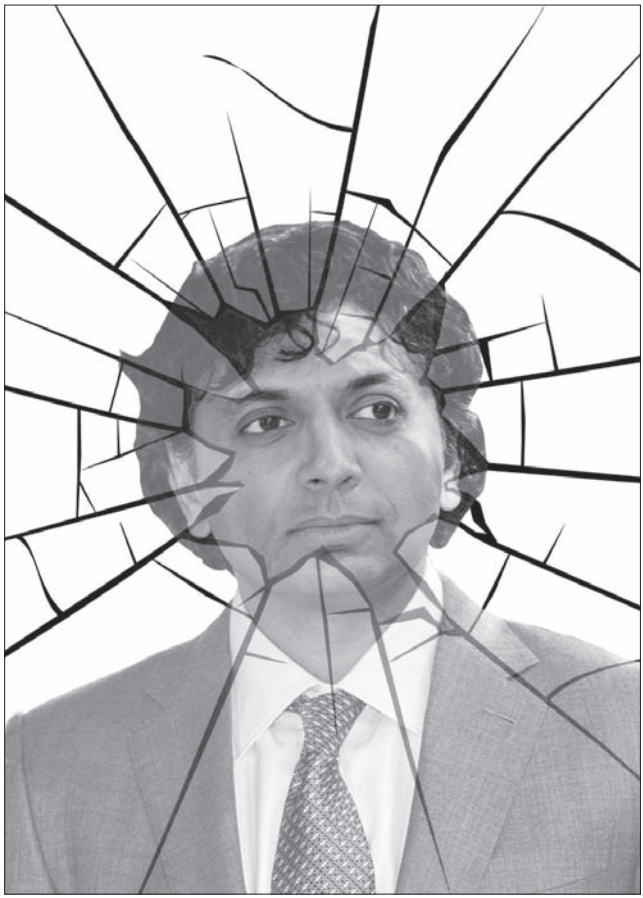
Book tells of plot against president

You won't see "The First Conspiracy" adapted for a Broadway stage any time soon, but author Brad Meltzer's discovery of — and subsequent book about — a plot to kill George Washington is a pretty stirring story about a Founding Father regardless.



- **More about 'The First Conspiracy' on Page 38.**

WEEKEND: MOVIES



Ahead of his time

'Glass' director Shyamalan's idea for a cinematic universe came years before superhero movies were commonplace

A sequel to "Unbreakable" and "Split," "Glass" unites three iconic M. Night Shyamalan characters — played by James McAvoy, Bruce Willis and Samuel L. Jackson — in a mental hospital to understand the realities and dark side of superpowers.

VIANNEY LE CAER, INVISION/AP

BY JEN YAMATO
Los Angeles Times

The ultimate M. Night Shyamalan twist was one no one saw coming.

After scoring a critical and commercial breakthrough with 1999's Oscar-nominated "The Sixth Sense," he's had more than his share of ups and downs with critics and at the box office. But the roller-coaster ride is reaching a new peak with a cinematic universe two decades in the making.

His latest film, "Glass," unites the lead characters of 2000's "Unbreakable" and 2016's "Split" for a compelling and sly exercise in creating a comic book-esque universe from scratch. And Shyamalan — breaking Hollywood rules by not working with pre-existing properties and making films on his own terms — just might succeed where others have failed.

"Glass" is the conclusion to a trilogy that Shyamalan, cinema's unorthodox auteur, has been orchestrating since "Unbreakable" — with a little help from the universe.

"So many things had to go right that had nothing to do with me that had to fall into place," Shyamalan said. "I've been fighting for so long to get things made and do them in the right way. When I look back on this trilogy and this movie there's a sense of, 'Wow — it was kind of meant to be.'"

A chance meeting with James McAvoy led to the actor starring in "Split" as Kevin Wendell Crumb, a man with dissociative identity disorder living with 23 "alters" known as the Horde. A "friendly agreement" with Disney exec Sean Bailey granted "Split" studio Universal permission to borrow Bruce Willis' "Unbreakable" character for the surprise post-credits cameo that signaled that the films occupied the same narrative universe.

And then everyone had to be game to come back and tie the trilogy together in "Glass," in which Willis fully reprises his role as everyman superhero David Dunn, now older, grizzlier and moonlighting as a vigilante hero known as the Overseer.

A kidnapping sends the Overseer on a collision course with the Horde, but "Glass" is purposefully named after Elijah Price, aka Mr. Glass, the comic book collector with a rare genetic disease who spent "Unbreakable" trying to prove he was the supervillain to Dunn's superhero.

For the past 16 years, "Glass" reveals, Price has been wheelchair-bound and under heavy sedation at the Raven Hill Memorial Psychiatric Research Hospital, where Dr. Ellie Staple (Sarah Paulson) seeks to treat all three men for the affliction she suspects they share: A clinical disorder in which delusional patients believe they have superpowers.

The linchpin to the series, Samuel L. Jackson's portrayal of Mr. Glass has been years in the making. And so has his understanding of what Price has endured since the events of "Unbreakable."

"I thought it important to show that his mind was even sharper, and his focus was more intense," said the actor via email before "Glass'" London premiere. "He's already been imprisoned by his body for his entire life. His incarceration has focused him that much more. When he learns about Crumb and his relationship with [Dunn], he sees the opportunity to achieve his greatest goal. He goes after setting it in motion with everything he's got."

"It had to be these studios," Shyamalan said of Universal and Disney, who co-produced with the filmmaker's Blinding Edge Pictures. "And it had to be these actors. There were a lot of 'ifs' on the table: Will they be available? Will they want to do this in the way I want to do this?"

Shyamalan had moved on to make original tales (2002's "Signs," 2004's "The Village," 2006's "Lady in the Water" and 2008's "The Happening") but found diminishing returns swinging for blockbuster heights (2010's "The Last Airbender" and 2013's "After Earth" underwhelmed at the box office and were savaged by critics).

2015's $5 million-budgeted "The Visit," made independently with Blumhouse for a fraction of what his biggest films cost, returned Shyamalan to his roots — and greater creative control. It grossed $98 million worldwide.

Fans — and his own stars, added Shyamalan — had been asking about an "Unbreakable" sequel since the film opened.

"It was actually them always saying to me, 'Let's make the sequel, let's make the sequel,'" Shyamalan said with a laugh. "And I was like, 'Yeah, yeah, yeah — I'm workin' on it!' I think they probably just kind of gave up on the idea that I was ever going to do it. Until I wrote 'Split.'"

He had the idea for the "Split" cameo and called Willis, who "was 100 percent for it," said Shyamalan. The actor filmed his scene in secret in a matter of hours. Shyamalan, meanwhile, kept the cameo footage out of early screenings of the film "just to be super safe — and to [let viewers] think of the movie as its own thing. It was a very healthy way to approach it."

While making "Split," he'd let McAvoy and costar Anya Taylor-Joy in on his plans, giving them an inkling of the cinematic worlds they'd be bridging. But Jackson had no clue that Willis' Dunn was back in action or what that might mean for their long-ago plans. Shyamalan broke the news with a cryptic message.

"Night surprised me with the idea of 'Glass,'" recalled Jackson. "He told me to see 'Split' and to give him a call. So I watched 'Split' and had no idea until the scene with Bruce at the end. When he mentioned Mr. Glass, I knew that we were finally going to do a sequel and that these films were in the same universe."

"He came out and said, 'What does this mean?'" Shyamalan said with a laugh. "It means we're making the sequel!"

Meanwhile, across the Shyamalan-verse ...

Sarah Paulson had just flown to New York with her freshly acquired 2017 Golden Globe for "American Crime Story: The People v. O.J. Simpson" in her carry-on luggage when a friend suggested they check out the new Shyamalan film.

"I'm a huge fan of his movies, and I always have been," said Paulson, en route to meet up with her "Glass" costars for the European press tour. "I saw 'Signs' at the Grove in Los Angeles with Amanda Peet, who wouldn't let me leave her house after because she was so afraid there was going to be some weird alien in the bathroom!"

"Nothing in his movies is happenstance," she added. "Everything is really purposeful, and that's extraordinary."

Paulson caught a showing of "Split" on 34th Street and erupted along with the rest of the audience when she realized what Willis' cameo meant. But she had no idea Shyamalan had her in mind to help complete the trilogy.

Shyamalan was writing the role that would eventually become Dr. Ellie Staple, a character that required a "powerful" actor to hold her own against Willis, Jackson and McAvoy.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25

WEEKEND: MOVIES

‘Glass’ takes audience on a frustrating ride

By Lindsey Bahr
Associated Press

Samuel L. Jackson’s Elijah Price, or Mr. Glass, as he prefers to be called, was by far the most compelling part of M. Night Shyamalan’s slow-burn comic book send-up “Unbreakable.” A brilliant, tortured manipulator and superhero enthusiast suffering from osteogenesis imperfecta (i.e. brittle bone disease), Glass is that kind of charismatic supervillain that you can’t get enough of.

Nineteen years is certainly a long time to wait for more Mr. Glass. But Shyamalan, even after naming this long-gestating film after Jackson’s character, decides to withhold him from the audience even longer. Yes, he makes Mr. Glass a highly sedated vegetable who gets to do little more than blink and intensely stare at the camera for what feels like more than half of the movie.

It’s one of the many ways in which “Glass,” which seems to delight in building up anticipation only to pull the rug out from under you, manages to both frustrate and underwhelm. I’m sure it’s some kind of meta-commentary on the futility of serialized storytelling, the contrivances and deification of comic book culture and easily malleable audience expectations, but in execution it mostly feels like a tub full of half-baked ideas that never really coalesce into something exciting, meaningful or all that memorable.

“Glass” definitely doesn’t care to help if you haven’t seen “Unbreakable” or “Split,” either. It just dives right in with little exposition. We see Bruce Willis’ David Dunn taking a couple of teen pranksters to task. Then it jumps to James McAvoy’s multiple personalities, who’ve decided to take four teenage cheerleaders hostage because they’re “impure” and “need to be punished.”

David, who is working alongside his now-grown son Joseph (Spencer Treat Clark, the same actor from “Unbreakable,” which is actually a nice touch), has been trying to find the missing cheerleaders. Joseph warns him to be careful, because David has also been branded a public nuisance for all of his would-be good deeds that have left criminals and victims injured and looking for someone to sue. If you’re thinking, wait, isn’t this sort of the plot of “Incredibles,” just wait because it even brushes up against some “Incredibles 2” themes, intentionally or not.

Photos courtesy of Universal Pictures/AP

Samuel L. Jackson, from left, James McAvoy and Bruce Willis star in “Glass.” Willis’ character from “Unbreakable” pursues “Split’s” McAvoy in M. Night Shyamalan’s converging-narratives sequel.

David and the “Horde” (the term used to describe the collective of all of McAvoy’s personalities, which range from a 9-year-old boy and an older British woman, to a terrifying flesh-eating creature called “The Beast”) meet and low-budget fight a bit, but are interrupted by the authorities and Sarah Paulson’s Dr. Ellie Staple who take them to the psychiatric hospital where Price is.

Dr. Staple explains, with oozing condescension, that she specializes in treating those afflicted by delusions of grandeur — aka, those who think they have superpowers. She says their abilities and their weaknesses are all in the mind, and can be explained away by science and childhood traumas. This little group therapy session in a bubblegum-pink room is one of the more compelling parts, and it seems like the film is gleefully destroying the superhero origin story myth, sending its main characters into a spiral of doubt.

But don’t get too attached to this, or any other path Shyamalan seems to be taking us down, because he will change course, backtrack and laugh at you for getting too committed to one narrative — while really going all in on some questionable ones, like having the Horde’s sole surviving captive from “Split,” Casey (Anya Taylor-Joy), come back as a sort of Stockholm Syndrome empathy machine to worry about him.

Mr. Glass does emerge from his vegetative state, eventually, and kicks the movie into gear as only Jackson can do. McAvoy is once again giving his all to all the characters, and watching him shift between them is still enjoyable, but perhaps not worth all the screen time it gets. Willis barely gets anything to do at all. But for all the hype behind these three characters meeting, and the years it took to get it off the ground, “Glass” is one big anti-climax.

“Glass” is rated PG-13 for violence including some bloody images, thematic elements and language. Running time: 129 minutes.

FROM PAGE 24

He visited Paulson on the set of “American Horror Story: Cult” to discuss the mystery project over lunch.

“I wanted someone complex and buoyant, and I always tend toward theater actors because their craft is strong. The way I shoot my movies without much coverage requires commitment; not fearing it but really embracing the concept that whatever choice you made that started your take, that’s the right choice,” said Shyamalan.

Paulson

He didn’t tell Paulson much in their meetings about the character. But three weeks later he called to offer her the part “and I burst into tears,” said Paulson. “I had no idea what it was going to be, but it was the idea of working with him in whatever capacity that was so thrilling. That’s when he told me it was the sequel to these two movies. And I was like, wait — what?!”

Adding another special undercurrent to “Glass” are the family members whose relationships to the central trio are key to understanding them as people, not just superpowered heroes or villains. Shyamalan tapped Spencer Treat Clark, who was 6 when he appeared in “Unbreakable,” to reprise his role as Dunn’s now-25-year-old son, Joseph. Charlayne Woodard returns as Elijah’s caring mother, Mrs. Price.

James McAvoy, left, and Anya Taylor-Joy star in the superhero thriller “Glass.”
Universal Pictures/AP

Shyamalan compares “Glass” to “The Sopranos.” “To see what [Tony Soprano’s] home life is like, going to therapy, his teenagers not listening to him, is amazing. Yeah, during the day he kills people. But he’s just a dude struggling,” he said. “For me, telling a comic book story about comic book characters and their struggles and seeing what their home life is like, essentially, ‘What are their hearts like when they’re at home?’ They’re just like us. It just so happens that they’re superheroes.”

Might more films in the “Unbreakable” universe be in the cards if “Glass” connects with audiences?

‘When I look back on this trilogy and this movie there’s a sense of, “Wow — it was kind of meant to be.”’
M. Night Shyamalan

“I highly doubt you will ever see another sequel from me. But I don’t want to be an idiot and say ‘never,’ because tomorrow you’ll read that I’m doing ‘Star Wars 10’ and go, ‘He lied!’” he said, laughing.

Sequels aren’t really his thing, said Shyamalan, who describes feeling more akin to a novelist, crafting original stories he dreams up out of his home base in Philly from his notebook of ideas.

“The challenge of original movies is that there’s no frame,” he said. “If you know it’s an appetizer, you’re taking it as an appetizer. If you know it’s an entree, you’re taking it as an entree — and you judge it that way. If I don’t tell you what you’re eating, then I say, ‘What do you think?’ It’s harder.”

“The nature of doing something unusual — I’m doing a sequel to two separate movies, from two separate generations, from two separate studios! — is the challenging part for me that makes me go, ‘OK. This dish has never been made before.’”

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES

Let the good times (re)roll

Remastered 'Katamari Damacy' will charm its players with strangeness

By Christopher Byrd
Special to The Washington Post

Ever since the study of consumer culture began, attention has been paid to the anxiety people feel toward their possessions. The downside to living in a society that values accumulation is that many of us feel uneasy about the amount of stuff that surrounds us. (Clutter, some psychologists tell us, can create a stressful environment.)

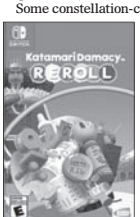
Of the innumerable artistic responses to this phenomenon, Keita Takahashi's classic game "Katamari Damacy" is one of the more sanguine. Takahashi's game about a little fellow tasked with rolling up the world's things into a massive ball was a surprise hit when it landed in 2004.

Since I never owned a PlayStation 2 I missed it, but I've long carried it on a mental shortlist of older titles that I'd like to try. So, I was eager to play "Katamari Damacy REROLL," a remaster that burnishes the original with HD graphics. The game was funnier — and harder — than I expected. Its sunny nihilism brightened my winter nights.

Thematically speaking, "Katamari Damacy" veers back and forth between destruction and restoration. At its start, the King of All the Cosmos goes on a bender and knocks the stars out of the sky. "Did you see?" he asks his son, the Prince. "We smiled a genuine smile. Did you see? The stars splintering in perfect beauty. Not that We can remember very clearly, but We were in all Nature's embrace."

Feeling a little guilty, but not that remorseful, the King directs the Prince to use his katamari, his magic ball, to roll up the earth's objects so that they can be shot into space and used to replace the missing stars. Each of the stages sees the King assign the Prince a goal. Most often he asks the Prince to roll up enough objects to expand the katamari to a certain size to create a star, or to accumulate enough of a specific type of object to create a constellation (cancer requires crabs, Gemini requires twins, Pisces requires fish, etc.)

Some constellation-creation missions ask you to find the largest specimen of a particular object in the world while avoiding its many smaller forms. Is it a bit tedious? You bet. Adding a bit of parental pressure, the King imposes a time limit on these activities saying that he can believe in the Prince for a specific amount of time. Conditional love is his forte.



Early stages have modest goals and generous time limits. The King tells the Prince to build himself up by using his katamari on tiny objects, such as thumbtacks and dice, so that he can work himself up to bigger challenges. Seeing such junk littered around makes the act of rolling things up feel purifying. In an interview with Polygon, during which Takahashi acknowledged that "'Katamari Damacy' is a take on mass consumption," he posed a rhetorical observation: "So many things we have — do we need that? Do you need that?"

As the Prince and his katamari develop, the King's requests become more demanding. To meet the tighter time constraints of the later levels, I found myself thinking like a racecar driver. That meant memorizing routes that would take me quickly between groups of similar-sized objects so that I could scale up the Prince's katamari in the most efficient way. (At length, I found myself rolling up baseball teams, boats and other grand things.) I found it ironic that a game that invites you to look contemptuously upon a world awash in objects that jumble up public and domestic spaces nudges you to adapt a mindset of a rapacious greed. Growth, at all costs, is what "Katamari Damacy" is all about.

Although the King tends to see things as a zero-sum game, failing to meet his demands yields its own perverse rewards. Before the Prince can retry a stage, he must endure a tongue lashing from his father that causes him to grovel on the ground. Watching the King speculate on his son's taste for minimalism and the like led me to LOL on a few occasions.

I played "Katamari Damacy REROLL" on the Nintendo Switch. The game's snug levels and straightforward gameplay lend themselves nicely to gaming on the go. I did, however, notice a number of visual hiccups, from pop-in graphics to collision detection bugs. These issues didn't especially detract from my overall experience, but they're hard to miss. In any case, I imagine that "Katamari Damacy REROLL" will charm today's players with its strangeness just as much as the original did in the past.

Platforms: Nintendo Switch, PC
Online: tinyurl.com/y7f26hjv

"Katamari Damacy REROLL" once again puts players in control of a highly adhesive ball (the Katamari), capable of collecting paper clips, books, cars, buildings, mountains and even continents, as it grows larger and larger.

Nintendo

More game reviews at stripes.com/games

In the driver's seat

More than 40 games await VR enthusiasts at VArea in Mainz

BY AARON KNOWLES
Stars and Stripes

Why just take a day trip to a nearby city when you can enter a whole new reality?

VArea, pronounced Vee-are-eya, is a virtual reality gaming studio in the city of Mainz-Weisenau, Germany, that offers a selection of more than 40 games on multiple types of VR platforms.

At 13 euros for 30 minutes, you have your choice of racing simulators while sitting in a sports car seat with a steering wheel or standing up on a VR catwalk that lets you walk in the game, as well as a room dedicated to your own VR experience without the chance of breaking a lamp or television screen.

Games even have multiplayer modes that allow you to play with friends.

With so many games to choose from, you have your choice of killing monsters, fighting zombies, racing against friends on a test track and even exploring the planet using a VR version of Google Earth.

Food is available at the front desk. I had the pizza instead of the nachos, and I was not disappointed. And it only took 15 minutes to cook the food.

Everything about VArea was a positive experience. The service included some of the most helpful people that I have met in Germany. I was changing games and platforms every 10 minutes and the staff didn't get upset at all. They were constantly making recommendations on their most popular games and the best ways to play.

VArea offers more than just VR experiences. They have board games, PlayStation, Xbox, television games streaming online, and even foosball and air hockey tables. It is possible to spend hours at VArea and not play the same game twice.

I would highly recommend this place for a fun family experience, a group of friends or a birthday party.

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ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS
Address: Weberstrasse 2-4, 55130 Mainz, Germany

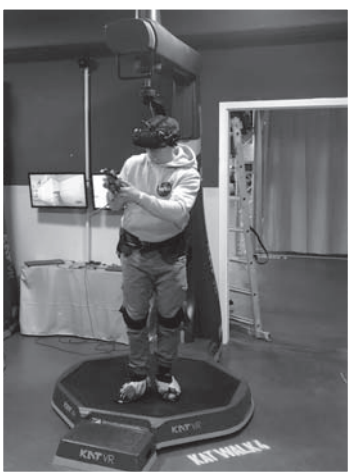
TIMES
Monday-Thursday 1 p.m.–11 p.m., Friday 1 p.m.–2 a.m., Saturday 10 a.m.–2 a.m., Sunday 10 a.m.–11 p.m.

COSTS
13 euros for 30 minutes on any VR rig

FOOD
Heavy snack-type food such as pizza and nachos is available at the front desk.

INFORMATION
varea.de
Phone: 06131 4924817

— Aaron Knowles



Customers at VArena in Mainz, Germany, can experience virtual reality in different gaming environments such as racing simulators and KAT Walk mini setups, which allow players to fully immerse themselves in a first-person shooter game.

PHOTOS BY AARON KNOWLES/Stars and Stripes

Scotland's scenic Isle of Skye rewards visitors

Scotland's islands may be at this northern nation's distant fringes, but those who venture to them are richly rewarded with dramatic landscapes, a taste of each island's rich heritage and warm welcomes. Among Scotland's countless islands, the favorite among travelers is the scenic Isle of Skye, where fun-to-drive mountain roads weave among grassy slopes and rocky ridges.

Just off Scotland's northwest coast, Skye is the country's second-biggest island (it takes about two hours to drive it from south to north). But it's sparsely populated — the island seems to have more sheep than locals — and it's been that way since the Highland Clearances in the 1800s. That's when wealthy landowners decided sheep were better for their bottom line than people. Landless peasants were driven out, and to this day the island's population is half of what it used to be.

Connected to mainland Scotland by a bridge, Skye is a two-hour drive from Inverness, the largest Highlands city. While most travelers visit Skye as a harried day trip from Inverness, it's better to spend at least two nights there.

Skye's best home base is Portree, with a picturesque harbor area but no real sights. The town center has a few hotels, hostels and bed-and-breakfasts, and several more B&Bs line the roads into and out of town. But as Skye has gotten very popular in recent years, Portree is now jammed with visitors in the summer. It's important to book accommodations as far ahead as possible.

While Portree has several good sit-down restaurants, my go-to meal is fish and chips at the harborside "chippy." Its outdoor picnic bench is forever empty, though, as seagulls are famously aggressive here. Hungry diners are forced to eat standing up against the wall ... or else a gull will swoop down for a slab of cod.

In good weather, the island's highlight is a drive north of Portree around the Trotternish Peninsula. This drive is packed with windswept castaway views, unique geological formations and some of Scotland's most dramatic scenery, including jaw-dropping cliffs plunging into the sea, such as the 200-foot-tall Kilt Rock, named for volcanic lava columns that look like pleats in a kilt.

Rick Steves

It's worth getting out of the car and taking a hike. One of my favorites is the easy walk across a dramatic escarpment called the "Quiraing," where landslides caused the jagged formations. Hikers are richly rewarded with a closer look at the formations and unforgettable views of the island. Even a short walk to a nearby bluff — to get away from the cars and be alone with the wind and the island wonder — is rewarding.

Another stop along the drive is the fine little Skye Museum of Island Life, which shows how a typical family here lived in the 1800s. Seven thatched stone huts represent a "croft" — a typical farming community of Scotland. In these huts, the kitchen was where all the action happened. Families would huddle around the hearth, where a peat fire would burn day and night, giving off its signature sweet, smoky smell. For social time, the community would gather for a ceilidh, where they'd gossip, drink whisky, then pick up some instruments and play music and dance.

DOMINIC ARIZONA BONUCCELLI/Ricksteves.com

Portree, the largest town on the Isle of Skye, is nestled deep in its protective harbor.

Aside from the Trotternish Peninsula, Skye has a handful of other worthy sights. Perched on a rock overlooking a sea loch, Dunvegan Castle is the residence of the MacLeod clan, who claim that this is the oldest continuously inhabited castle in Scotland. The castle provides an interesting look at rural Scottish aristocratic lifestyles and their antiquated clan system.

For whisky lovers, a tour and tasting at the Talisker Distillery is a must. This Skye institution, making whisky here since 1830, is situated at the base of a hill with 14 springs. Island whisky tends to be smokier than mainland whisky due to the amount of peat smoke used during malting. It's fun to taste and compare.

If you know where to look, you'll find that the island is strewn with the scant remains of past civilizations. Just off the road between the Talisker Distillery and Dunvegan Castle hides Dun Beag, an Iron Age fort. A path from the road leads you on a 10-minute walk to a 2,000-year-old stone tower capping a hill — a stony remnant of a long-forgotten, proto-Scottish people. The fort was likely built as a lookout tower and/or safehouse, where families and their domesticated animals would gather in times of attack.

Scrambling around Dun Beag is particularly evocative. Surrounded by 360 degrees of deep-green views, it feels as if you're uncovering yet another dimension of this fascinating land.

Rick Steves (www.ricksteves.com) writes European travel guidebooks and hosts travel shows on public television and public radio. Email him at rick@ricksteves.com and follow his blog on Facebook.

TOP TRAVEL PICKS

Grand Restaurant fest in the Czech Republic

Prague's culinary scene remains in flux but strives for greatness. In its review of the dining scene in 2018, the bloggers at Taste of Prague food tours speak of the public's great love for dining out, their demand for common sense, quality and transparency whenever they're spending big, and a distaste for any kind of hype. The year ushered in the opening of three major new restaurants and a highly rated craft beer brewery, while coffee bars continue to thrive.

That's reason enough for fans of fine dining to find their way to Prague. There's additional incentive now through Feb. 28, as the Grand Restaurant Festival offers the chance to sample delicious dishes in top restaurants at discounted prices.

The festival, celebrating its 10th edition this year, spreads well beyond Prague's city limits, with 91 restaurants in 36 cities and 14 regions participating this time around.

The country's largest winter food festival pays homage to one of the world's luminaries of art and science, Leonardo da Vinci. The 500-year anniversary of da Vinci's death is being marked with initiatives across Europe; here, chefs from select Czech restaurants prepare special "Taste da Vinci" degustation menus drawing inspiration from his paintings, inventions and curiosity toward science, as well as from the era in which he lived.

Karen Bradbury

Read more about things to do in the Europe Traveler blog: **stripes.com/blogs/europe-traveler**

More than 40 restaurants in the Czech capital take part.

The festival offers three types of tastings: a basic package consisting of one dish of the diner's choice and one drink (water, a glass of wine, or a beer) for 250 Czech Koruna (about $11.25); a two-course tasting with two dishes, the aforementioned drink and a bottle of natural water for 500 CZK; or a three-course tasting with three festival dishes, two drinks and a bottle of water for 600 CZK. Special events such as themed dining experiences and brunches may be booked online under the heading "Yummy experiences." Reservations must be made through the Grand Restaurant Festival website and paid for within three working days of the booking. Online: grandrestaurantfestival.cz

No plans to travel to the Czech Republic in the weeks ahead? Other foodie events throughout Europe include the Gastro Festival Madrid (Jan. 23-Feb. 10); Taste of Antwerp in Belgium (May 1 and 3-5); Taste of Amsterdam (May 31-June 2); Taste of Stockholm (June 5-8); Taste of Dublin (June 13-16); Taste of Helsinki (mid-June); Copenhagen Cooking (Aug. 23-Sept. 1); Bergen Matfestival in Norway (Aug. 31-Sept. 1); Mold Food & Drink Festival in Wales (Sept. 21-22); Kookeet in Bruges, Belgium (late September); Galway International Oyster & Seafood Festival (late September); O Grove Seafood Festival in Spain (early October); or the London Restaurant Festival (Oct. 1-31).

Celtic Connections in Glasgow

Expel any notion of the winter blues by attending one of the UK's most vibrant celebrations of Celtic music, running through Feb. 3 in Glasgow, Scotland. With around 2,100 performing artists and 300 events across 20 venues, Celtic Connections is the largest winter music festival of its kind.

GAELLE BERI/Glasgow Life

Celtic Connections concerts abound in interesting venues across Glasgow, Scotland, such as the Old Fruitmarket, through Feb. 3.

Celtic Connections is an ambitious undertaking spotlighting a vast range of musical styles, with Americana, folk, world, indie, jazz & soul, traditional, fusion and Gaelic among the genres featured. This year's partner for Showcase Scotland is Galacia, a region in northwest Spain with ancient Celtic roots and a traditional instrument known as the gaita, a type of bagpipe.

In addition to taking in concerts in interesting venues across the city from churches to museums to the city halls, visitors can take part in a number of side activities. The Glasgow City Music Tours are two-hour walks through the city streets with the retelling of the stories of the songwriters and tale-tellers who've shaped Glasgow's vibrant folk culture. The Danny Kyle Open Stage is a series of concerts spotlighting up-and-coming musical talent. All of these concerts are free to attend and take place in the Exhibition Hall at the Concert Hall. Six of the participating groups or artists will be chosen to show what they've got at a showcase concert on Feb. 3, the final night of the festival. Online: celticconnections.com

The baked potato with spinach is a tasty vegetarian option at Oskar in Bayreuth, Germany.

The roasted pork comes with sauerkraut on the side that's just as delicious as the meat.

Dumplings stuffed with sour cherries are among the dessert items on the menu.

After Hours: Germany

By Martin Egnash
Stars and Stripes

Bavarian food is typically hearty and filling. It's also often bland.

There just isn't much call for spices beyond salt and pepper in many dishes, outside of some of the sausages.

Oskar — Das Wirtshaus am Markt goes further than the norm, providing a an exceptionally flavorful sauce with their meat-and-potatoes Bavarian standards.

Situated in Bayreuth's old city hall, the restaurant is elaborately decorated. It has extensive patio seating that offers ample opportunities to people-watch and admire the surroundings.

One of Oskar's highlights is the Bayreuther Krenfleisch. It's described as a "boiled rump of beef," but don't let the description turn you off of it. The spicy horseradish sauce goes really well with the rump, and I challenge anyone not to sop up every bit of it by the end of the meal.

Another great entree that stands out is the crispy pork shoulder. The tender meat, juxtaposed with the crispy fat on top, is a treat for the senses, and once again, the sauce turns what otherwise might have been a bland slab of meat into something more.

While most of the meals come with a giant, squishy potato dumpling that you can use to absorb whatever sauce your meal comes with, the Saftiger Schweinebraten, a tender pork roast soaked in thick, tangy gravy, also comes with the best sauerkraut I've ever had.

Vegetarians are surprisingly rewarded in this palace of pork. The cheese spaetzle looks creamy and delicious, but I really recommend the baked potato with spinach, even if you do eat meat. This dish is served with chunks of sheep cheese and covered in spinach sauce.

For dessert, Oskar's has seasonally changing dumplings stuffed with fruit, lathered in a vanilla sauce. When I went, sour cherry was the fruit filling of choice, and it was fantastic.

There are some nonalcoholic drinks on the menu, but the beverage list is dominated by an extensive variety of beer, including the usual Bavarian lager, dunkel and pilsner. But there's also a hoppy pale ale that reminds me of beer back home in the United States.

egnash.martin@stripes.com
Twitter: @Marty_Stripes

PHOTOS BY MARTIN EGNASH/Stars and Stripes

You can sit on the patio outside Oskar, a restaurant in Bayreuth, Germany, that serves up more than the usual meat and potatoes. Exceptionally flavorful sauces make their meals truly special.

OSKAR — DAS WIRTSHAUS AM MARKT

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Dress: Casual
Phone: (+49)(0)921 516-0553

— Martin Egnash

COMMENTARY

Appreciation, never appropriation, the aim for this family's menu

By Jamie Schler
Special to The Washington Post

A video of a white American chef demonstrating the "right way" to prepare and eat Vietnamese pho made headlines just two years ago, kicking off a long, complicated conversation about what is culturally appropriate when it comes to food. Chefs and writers debated the question of who has the qualifications to claim authority in sharing the recipe or instructing the preparation of a "culturally sensitive" dish, or assert expertise of a cuisine not one's own. Can just anyone understand a dish so intimately as to be able to faithfully reproduce and explain it, whether or not one is born into the culture of that dish?

I followed the discussion closely, but the more I listened, the more something niggled. I agree that the history of a dish, deeply rooted in the identity of a people, is fundamental in defining a dish as cultural. A community and a terroir together create a recipe out of available ingredients, necessity, traditions, innovation and savoir-faire. To claim expertise requires significant knowledge of and respect for those roots.

But a dish is more than the sum of its ingredients, deeper than its origins. What I found missing from the discussion was context, something that I learned raising multicultural sons.

Food has always been an important transmitter of stories and heritage in my family. I was raised in a Jewish home where the partaking of very specific foods was the centerpiece of each holiday. An essential part of the festivities was the recounting of the history, the explaining of the symbolism around the preparation and the eating of those foods. Our home was also unquestionably American, and I was very conscious of the contrast between these two facets of my family — in not only what we ate, but also how and why we ate what we did.

I eventually married a Frenchman raised in a Catholic home, and when our children were 1 and 3, we moved to Italy, where we would remain for seven years before moving back to France. As our sons grew, I watched them struggle between conflicting identities: American, French, Italian, Jewish, Catholic. They not only needed to master three languages, but they had to understand the codes of behavior of five distinct groups. Having grown up within two cultures and now living in two more, I became both an outside observer and an insider, helping my sons understand the cultural nuances while navigating them myself.

My husband and I have always seen food as the window into a culture. By the time our sons were born, stories of history and customs, enlivened by personal anecdote and family lore, were already part of mealtime, prompted by whatever we were eating. So it was natural for us to use food as a way to explain to our sons about their different environments, to bring order to their cultural chaos and help them feel anchored to their unique heritages.

But stories weren't enough, nor was the fact that they were fundamentally part of each of these groups. We cooked and ate traditional foods with Americans, French, Italians, Jews and Catholics, observing and imitating. My husband had lived in Morocco, working and learning to cook within the Muslim community before we met, opening our sons to further comparison and awareness of the world. I finally saw that it wasn't only religious foods that were rife with meaning. All cuisines were.

It's mealtimes, people gathered around the table, that reflect and reinforce bonds of family, community and ethnicity. The dishes chosen, how meals are organized, and the rituals of serving and eating mirror social hierarchy, and strengthen behaviors, beliefs and traditions.

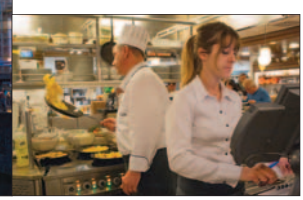
Once a dish is "born," it isn't static. It can be influenced by outside sources; it can travel and evolve over time. The same dish can be interpreted differently by people of the same nation. What tethers it to a culture is its context within the home and community, and what it represents. The rituals of who prepares it and for whom, why, how and when it is served are handed down along with the recipe.

Must someone be born into a culture to speak authoritatively on its food or replicate it faithfully? No. I'm proof of that. I've been able to shrug on new identities through having lived and experienced cultures that I wasn't born into. I obtained a deep understanding and then transmitted each cultural heritage to my sons.

Food is meant to be explored and discovered, experimented with and shared. Imitation is flattering, and creativity is exciting. We do this all the time with family and friends as we prepare dishes in their traditional forms or play with them, fusing them with elements of another culture, deconstructing and reconstructing recipes.

But when we position ourselves as an authority, we can't separate food from its cultural context if we want to explain or represent it, or we lose its meaning. Food, like culture itself, is a living thing; people live and relate to it, share it, communicate tacitly through it. This is what should be at the core of the question of cultural appropriation.

Embracing BERLIN



PHOTOS BY ALAN BEHR/TNS

Clockwise from above: A couple takes a selfie in front of the mural on the Berlin Wall East Side Gallery. Tossing potatoes at Kartoffelacker at KaDeWe department store. The Bode Museum on the Spree River is one of Berlin's various landmarks.

Germany's capital city leaves its mark on this visitor

BY ALAN BEHR
Tribune News Service

In the shadow of the ruined spire of the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, a platoon of protesters lifted banners and voices in outrage. Their grievances were with the policies of Recep Erdogan, the president of Turkey, who would be arriving in Berlin the next day for a state visit. Erdogan would tie up traffic during his stay, which coincided with mine, rather as happened during the visit of the last dignitary who came to Berlin the same moment as I had, the Dalai Lama — but for very different reasons.

I was wearing a business suit and snapping a few photos with a Leica M when a conservatively dressed local woman came up and asked, after a few leading questions, if I was a member of the Turkish secret police. It took giving her a glimpse of my German passport to temper her suspicions as she kept us talking, trying to place my accent, but what finally did it for her was that I said I was a copyright lawyer in town from my home in New York City for a conference at the Hotel Intercontinental; having satisfied herself that no spy acting so conspicuously would come up with such a cover story, she left with a smile.

It was indeed true. Lawyers do not typically leave their mark on the cities through which they pass. One could expect, for example, that Berlin's famous sex clubs did not brim with newfound business that week, but we managed with the equally famous Museum Island, which is literally an island in the Spree River shared by five of the city's prominent museums. The star of the collections, the Pergamon Altar, is off limits during a restoration that likely will take longer than the eight years that had been needed to disassemble it in Turkey and bring it to Berlin. The Ishtar Gate of Babylon, imposing, blue and magnificent in its own right, serves as the Pergamon Museum's main attraction while the altar is restored.

Berlin has three opera houses and arguably the world's greatest symphony orchestra, the Berlin Philharmonic; lawyers fanned out for performances and, in the case of the Comic Opera, an impressive backstage tour. It was only when the conference was over that I had the time to spare to treat myself to a performance. Fortunately, I was accompanied by my old friend David Lee Brewer, the operatic tenor and voice coach (if you like how Beyonce sings, give David the credit he is due), who lives in Berlin. We sat in the orchestra of the midcentury-modern Deutsche Oper, listening to a Richard Wagner in a production that substantially reimagines "Tristan und Isolde." Although the story dates back to the 12th century, the set is from the same era as the opera house. I likely would never have understood, had I not brought along my own internationally renowned authority, that, in this interpretation, Tristan was not the real lover of Isolde but a metaphor for heroin, which she appeared to shoot up on two occasions during the performance.

The orchestra pit at the Comic Opera.

During the intermissions, I asked David if, as an African-American, he still felt more comfortable in Berlin than in the United States.

"Absolutely," he told me. "I took a friend to KaDeWe, the main department store here, and we went up and down in the elevator together six times so I could show him that, when women come in and see a black man riding with them, they don't reflexively clench their handbags."

Sunday came — a traditionally quiet day in busy Berlin, a family day without business deadlines or meetings. I would not be the first to observe that Germans are skittish about their history, and that includes German families such as mine that came back into the population (albeit as de facto expatriates) during a detour through enforced exile. There was a short view of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (the Holocaust Memorial), then a ride in a pedicab driven by the affable and obviously well-toned Christian, who has been pumping the pedals for 16 years and who can give running commentary in German or English. He took me to the East Side Gallery, which, at 1.3 kilometers, is the longest remaining part of the Berlin Wall, the panels of its eastern flank now serving as canvases of an open-air museum. The wall is part of my personal history because I was one of the last people to see it alive, as it were. On my first visit to Berlin, it stood before me, a prison wall in all but name and a visual metaphor for the paradoxically utopian brutality that built it and that killed people trying to make their way over it. Two weeks later, Berliners once trapped behind it were dancing on it.

Then it was back to the Brandenburg Gate, that neoclassical monument dedicated, despite its triumphal look, to peace. (Yes, Prussians enjoyed interludes of peace just as much as anyone else.) Inevitably, Starbucks next called, and then it was across the street to the Adlon — because I so enjoy being in that fine, restrained lobby and Erdogan was by now safely back in Turkey, after stopping off briefly to open a mosque and to snarl traffic in Cologne. My history tour ended with the Berlin Wall Memorial, built in another zone where the city's internal barrier had stood. Bearing the description, "In memory of the city's division from 13 August 1961 to 9 November 1989 and of the victims of communist despotism," the memorial plays an unsettling oral narrative in the form of a recorded reading of the names of people killed there while trying to do what anyone can do today: head across town.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31

KNOW & GO

HOTELS AND HOTEL RESTAURANTS

Rocco Forte Hotel de Rome and La Banca: www.roccofortehotels.com; U.S. and Canadian hotel reservations (also for the Hotel Adlon Kempinski) through Leading Hotels of the World, 1-800-745-8883.

The Intercontinental Berlin: www.ihg.com; 1-877-424-2449. Luxury for our conference attendees, with a complete spa and large indoor pool. The hotel's gourmet rooftop restaurant, Hugos, has a Michelin star and great views of Berlin.

Pino (Potsdam): www.pino-potsdam.de

NIGHTS AT THE OPERA

There are three opera houses in Berlin and as in the rest of Germany, opera is a family experience, priced so that almost anyone can afford to go — and bring the children. You may dress as you please. At the Deutsche Oper, people appeared in jeans and in suits — and there was even one man in a tuxedo, just as if it were Monday night at the Met, back in New York.

Deutsche Oper: www.deutscheoperberlin.de.

Staatsoper: www.staatsoper-berlin.de.

Komische Oper Berlin (Comic Opera Berlin). "Comic," from an old French term, means, in this instance, an opera for everyone, not just the elite: www.komische-oper-berlin.de.

FROM PAGE 30

This is an old tip of mine that I will now share with you: the best antidote to recent German history is classic Italian food. That can be hard to manage in Berlin on a Sunday evening, but good fortune, on my walk to the Rocco Forte Hotel de Rome — a hip luxury property massaged into the former headquarters of a major bank — La Banca ("The Bank") was open for business and ready to serve. After an almost obligatory minestrone starter, I had something that is a particular treat in Germany: venison, interpreted here in an Italian way by head chef Davide Mazzarella, with a chestnut puree, chanterelles and a careful blending of three types of fruit — figs, dates and pomegranate.

The next day, I met David at KaDeWe, which is a source of luxury versions of just about anything but is also a social hall with a gourmet supermarket and large choice of novel dining spots. I started at the Moet & Chandon Champagne Bar. (You find a barstool wherever one is handy and order a flute of any of several different types of Champagne.) Then I met David at the food island known as the Kartoffelacker (the Potato Field), which turns a German staple, once considered peasant sustenance, into a culinary experience. I ordered mine baked, with a chicken ragout. I rounded the visit by purchasing replacements for the German pattern of everyday tableware that got in the way during a Nerf gun fight. (Fair enough, maybe it was me doing the shooting and ducking at the time and not my 9-year-old or his friends.)

At dusk, I was in the nearby town of Potsdam, where Frederick the Great kept his summer palace, Sanssouci — a mini-Versailles. My friend and colleague Axel (whom I had last seen at a large legal conference in Seattle that he had chaired) gave me a tour of the formal garden — an expense of manicured beauty so vast, we did only one-third of it in about an hour and a quarter. Then it was to Pino, a brightly lighted and sophisticated but informal Italian restaurant on a quiet street, where I enjoyed some creative ravioli with truffles over conversation with Axel and his charming wife, Wiebke, a lawyer, and his clever daughter, Jette, who is studying to be — you guessed it. A lawyer.

I was in an understandably good mood when I stood in line to deposit my suitcase at the airport — until I was pulled aside by a very short man with a very stern attitude who announced himself as security and demanded to know why I had come to Germany. "Because I'm German," I explained. It must again have been with a Turkish accent, so when that did not satisfy him, I had to tell him everything I had done the previous day (see above). It was only when I said I enjoyed visiting Sanssouci Park in Potsdam that he said I gave the correct answer and pivoted to his left, next to challenge the bona fides of the grandmotherly American behind me. There was only one thing left to do: I had just enough time before the flight to see if the airport might just have a good Italian restaurant.

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Spout lookout

Warm winter waters off the coast of Okinawa draw whales, watchers

BY AYA ICHIHASHI
Stars and Stripes

The Kerama Islands are only about 25 miles from Naha — just an hour-long ferry ride away. But, during the winter season, the waters surrounding the small group of islands might as well be a world away from the hustle and bustle of Okinawa's largest city, as the area transforms into one of the best whale-watching spots in the world.

Every year, humpback whales migrate to the temperate waters near Okinawa to give birth to their calves. For those interested in seeing these massive mammals up close, several whale-watching tours are offered throughout the winter season. (The whale-watching season runs through early April.)

The best way to take a whale-watching tour is to take a high-speed ferry from Naha to one of the Kerama Islands (which can cost up to 5,970 yen, or about $55, roundtrip for adults) and to then choose a tour operator upon arrival. I opted to head to Zamami Island, where I signed up for an excursion offered by the Zamami Whale Watching Association. Tours departing directly from Okinawa also are available — but I prefer the flexibility of going to the islands so I can explore for a while afterward.

The tour, which costs 6,000 yen for adults and 3,000 yen for children, is about 2½ hours long and offered twice daily — once in the morning and once in the afternoon. It's best to reserve your spot on the tour in advance through the ZWWA website.

For those who tend to get seasick, it might be best to take motion sickness medication the night before or the morning of your excursion, as the waters can be quite choppy.

After checking in, visitors are given a short introduction to humpback whales, but the presentation is conducted in Japanese. Once aboard, the designated whale searchers on the boat's crew scan the waters and guide the boat captains to nearby pods of whales.

The best way to spot a whale is to look for the spouts of warm air that the whales expel from their blowholes as they exhale — the spouts look like fountains shooting up from the ocean.

Another easy way to spot whales is to find ones that are breaching or slapping their tails on the water's surface. After disappearing into the water, it could be anywhere from 15 to 20 minutes before the whale surfaces again.

A pod of mothers and calves is much easier to watch, as the calves cannot remain submerged for long. Because of this, the young whales usually hang out near the surface of the water and are more visible to whale watchers.

On one whale-watching excursion, I once saw a mother whale teaching her calf how to breach by leaping from the water. It was one of my favorite memories in 11 years of living on Okinawa.

Several years ago, I had another close encounter with a mother whale and her calf as they swam beneath the boat. The whales were so close that I could see the barnacles on the mother whale's skin.

After your whale-watching excursion, take the local bus (300 yen for adults) from the port to Furuzamami Beach, one of the most popular beaches on the island. Furuzamami was voted the best beach in Japan on TripAdvisor and has two stars from the renowned Michelin Guide.

The waters of Furuzamami Beach are relatively warm in winter, reaching about 68 degrees Fahrenheit — so it is nice enough to dip your feet in or snorkel, if you bring your own gear. There are few local restaurants on Zamami Island, and the information desk at the port is always happy to offer recommendations.

To see a whale up close is a rare opportunity, and many enthusiasts travel great distances hoping to catch a glimpse. But on Okinawa, world-class whale-watching in the winter is only a short ferry ride away.

ichihashi.aya@stripes.com

PHOTOS BY AYA ICHIHASHI/Stars and Stripes

Every year, humpback whales migrate to the temperate waters near Okinawa to give birth to their calves. This provides an excellent opportunity to see the huge mammals up close.

Okinawa's ever-popular Furuzamami Beach was voted the best beach in Japan on TripAdvisor.

ON THE QT

COSTS

Prices for whale watching excursions vary based on the company and length of the tour. Individuals should also factor in the cost of the ferry to an excursion's departure point if not purchasing a tour that departs directly from Naha. The Zamami Whale Watching Association's tour, which departs from Zamami Island, costs 6,000 yen (or about $55) for adults and 3,000 yen for children.

INFORMATION

Online: zwwa.okinawa/englishinfomation

— Aya Ichihashi

The best way to spot a whale is to look for spouts — the streams of condensed air the whales expel from their blowholes — as they look like fountains shooting from the ocean.

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Scenic summit

Enjoy stunning views of Sapporo atop Hokkaido's Mount Moiwa

PHOTOS BY SETH ROBSON/Stars and Stripes

High above Sapporo, Mount Moiwa offers an epic view of the city to enjoy with warmly-dressed family, friends and significant others. Below: Mo-risu, the mountain's mascot.

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

If you fare well in cold weather, or own enough warm clothing, you can experience some spectacular views of Hokkaido's largest city from the summit of Mount Moiwa.

At 1,742 feet tall, the mountain towers over Sapporo's western suburbs and offers a panoramic view of the city, Ishikari Bay and nearby peaks.

Visitors can reach the top of Mt. Moiwa by riding the ¾-mile-long Mount Moiwa Ropeway, before transferring to a smaller cable car that stops at an observation platform.

Up here, you might bump into the mountain's mascot, Mo-risu, who looks a little like the forest-dwelling Totoro from the beloved Japanese animated film "My Neighbor Totoro." Mo-risu is supposed to resemble the Siberian flying squirrels that inhabit the area — although he doesn't look particularly capable of flight.

The indigenous Ainu people called this mountain Inkarushibe, describing a place where people climbed up and looked out.

There are five main hiking trails that range in length from about 1.5 miles to 2.8 miles, all of which take visitors through a primeval forest that was designated a national monument in 1921.

On winter nights, you can see countless twinkling lights from the city below while standing on the summit's viewing platform. How long you'll spend looking at them might depend on the wind chill and the quality of your cold-weather gear.

Locals flock to the lookout due to its reputation as a popular date spot. Many padlocks left behind by lovebirds, known as "love locks," hang from a fence at the summit. If you want to leave behind a love lock of your own, they're sold at a nearby shop. There's also a large "Bell of Happiness" that visitors can ring, if they're so inclined.

Those who want a closer look at what's below can take advantage of the various binoculars bolted to the viewing platform — but after a few minutes marveling at the lights, you'll probably want to seek shelter and warmth inside.

For those looking to keep warm, the area has a planetarium and The Jewels, a French restaurant with a view. Visitors seeking a quick snack can check out the small shop on site, which sells hot drinks, ice cream and other treats. Despite the low temperatures, the view from Mt. Moiwa makes it worth adding to any Hokkaido itinerary.

robson.seth@stripes.com

ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS

Fushimi 5-chome 3-7, Chuo-ku, Sapporo. From Maruyama Koen Station on the Subway Tozai Line, take the JR Hokkaido Bus (Junkan Maru 10/11) and get off at "Moiwa Sanroku" or "Ropeway iriguchi" bus stop.

TIMES

Winter, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m; Summer, 10:30 a.m. to 10 p.m.

COSTS

Ropeway and cable car: Adults 1,700 yen (about $15), children 850 yen.

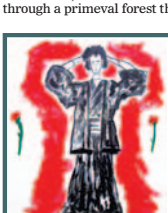
FOOD

The Jewels, a French restaurant, has a menu that ranges from 900 yen for a pasta salad during lunch to 9,500 yen for a dinner course including local ham, seafood and beef. There is also a small gift shop selling snacks and souvenirs.

INFORMATION

Online: tinyurl.com/y75jn2ut

— Seth Robson



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TINA FINEBERG/AP

A balloon depicting Goku, from the "Dragon Ball" manga series, is part of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York on Nov. 22. "Dragon Ball" anime has influenced pop culture for years, earning praise from the likes of Michael B. Jordan, Ronda Rousey and Chris Brown.

From anime to the end zone

Japanese 'Dragon Ball' puts its stamp on pop culture thanks to its famous fans

CRISTY RADECIC, INVISION/AP

A pedicab driver dressed as Goku pulls passengers July 20 at Comic-Con International in San Diego.

BY JONATHAN LANDRUM JR.
Associated Press

"Dragon Ball" may be a Japanese-born anime, but the series has become a major pop culture influencer for years. Rappers sprinkle references in their rhymes, athletes channel the character's super powers when making big plays and the franchise's star even made a towering appearance at November's Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

That influence stateside is likely to grow with the Jan. 16 theatrical release of "Dragon Ball Super: Broly," the 20th film in the "Dragon Ball" franchise that spans video games, six animated spinoffs and more than 500 television episodes. It all started in 1984 when Akira Toriyama created the best-selling comic book series, known as a manga in Japan.

"'I've been a fan for so long, and I know a lot of others are too. It's like a cult following,'' said De'Aaron Fox, the 21-year-old Sacramento Kings guard who owns a pair of Dragon Ball Z-themed basketball shoes. Chicago Bulls forward Lauri Markkanen and Golden State Warriors player Jordan Bell are also fans of the anime who have worn custom Dragon Ball-themed shoes in games.

The franchise stars Goku, an alien who lands on Earth as a child and trains in martial arts through his adulthood, venturing across the globe to find seven orbs, known as Dragon Balls. He and other human-looking aliens, known as Saiyans, occasionally transform into Super Saiyans with enormous power that unleashes a glowing aura and random arcs of electricity around them.

"'Dragon Ball' really made an imprint on the world, particularly in entertainment,'' Fox said. "You hear so many references in songs, mostly from hip-hop and rap. Athletes are coming out as fans as well. Like, people are saying they want to become like Goku. It's a big deal."

Its crossover appeal was evident during the Macy's Thanksgiving parade, when a 56-foot-tall, 70-foot-long Goku balloon floated above Manhattan, making the front page of The New York Times.

Many have followed "Dragon Ball" since they were kids, and the more famous fans incorporated it into their work, too.

Chris Brown posted an image on social media of a Dragon Ball tattooed on his leg and Goku's face painted on a red Lamborghini. Chance the Rapper has mentioned the anime in two songs. Before a wrestling match, Ronda Rousey wore a shirt with her favorite character and "cartoon crush" Vegeta, the prince of the Saiyans who is an ally of Goku.

The Super Saiyan form is popular in the hip-hop community. Los Angeles Lakers guard Lonzo Ball along with Big Sean, Lil Uzi Vert, The Weeknd and Childish Gambino have rapped about achieving Super Saiyan status in their songs.

After Cleveland Browns tight end Darren Fells scored a touchdown against the Oakland Raiders this season, he and David Njoku performed the fusion dance. In the anime, the fusion dance merges two or more bodies together to form a powerful entity.

The self-professed "Dragon Ball" experts practiced the dance during training camp on HBO's "Hard Knocks."

"We worked on it in camp and we do it here and there in practice," Njoku said. "If I score or he scores, we'll do it. We put it all together in the Raiders game."

When Fox reaches a higher level on the basketball court, he uses the phrase to compliment himself.

"When I'm ballin' like crazy on the court, they say I'm going Super Saiyan," he said.

Artist Jake Merten has created several murals dedicated to "Dragon Ball" characters in several cities including Los Angeles, Chicago, Kansas City and Denver and plans to create a new one to celebrate "Dragon Ball: Broly" this month in L.A.

"As a kid, I liked the good-versus-evil story, but I was drawn in through the different aesthetics that were used," said Merten, 30. "It was completely different than American cartoons. Even as a child, I appreciated the art direction and the way the TV show took on a different form than other cartoons, animes or movies."

The "Dragon Ball" franchise has been criticized for sometimes having flawed animations and story inconsistencies between its anime and manga.

But Sean Schemmel, who has voiced Goku in the English version since 1999, said "Dragon Ball" will stack up better than other anime. Other popular ones include "One Piece," "Naruto," "Case Closed" and "Golgo 13."

"I believe a hundred years from now, there will be no anime bigger than 'Dragon Ball,'" Schemmel said. "There's a bunch of anime coming out of Japan, and we work on a lot of them. But in terms of the epic scope, and the crossover mass appeal, it's going to be hard to beat 'Dragon Ball.' It's a special show that inspires those who don't have a voice."

Signed, sealed, delivered

Ghostwriters and robots will write your thank you notes for you

By Richard Chin
Star Tribune (Minneapolis)

Taryn Singer spends a lot of time feeling thankful.

It's her job, in fact, to write thank you notes — dozens at a time — to complete strangers.

Even in an age when it seems like any sentiment can be expressed by a text, email, emoji or GIF, there are a few times when etiquette still demands a handwritten thank you.

If you're too busy (read: lazy) to put pen to paper to thank Aunt Judy for throwing you a baby shower or cousin Phil for your wedding present, you can now outsource that onerous chore to another human — or even a robot.

Singer's one-woman company, WithThanks, will write compose, address, stamp and mail handwritten letters of gratitude to friends and families for $4 to $5 per letter, depending on order volume, plus postage and stationery costs.

(For younger readers: A letter is a message written on a piece of paper tucked into a sort of paper pocket called an envelope. A special rectangular sticker, called a stamp, has the power to magically transport the letter to any address in the world.)

Singer, 36, of New York City, started her thank you note service about a year ago after deciding that her previous life working as a corporate attorney wasn't for her.

Although she's diligent about writing her own thank you notes, she realized that a lot of people dread the task. (Her own husband confessed that he never sent out thank you notes after his bar mitzvah.)

Plus, she has really good handwriting.

"A lot of people don't like their handwriting, and they want someone with nice handwriting to do it," Singer said.

Singer provides clients with a spreadsheet where they can fill out the names and addresses of the recipients and what they are being thanked for.

Then she ghostwrites four or five lines of appreciation for that pasta maker that your sister sent you, or the graduation money from Aunt Janice.

After you approve the content, Singer gets it down on paper using a Pilot Juice 0.7mm gel ink pen in neat print or cursive, your choice. She typically signs "With love, [your name]."

The result is that increasingly rare expression of personalized gratitude captured in ink and dead trees.

"An actual handwritten note shows you took the time and you care," Singer said.

Except you didn't take the time. You just hired someone else to do it.

"I know," Singer said. "That is the one rub with this."

Fortunately, in an era of text messages and digital signatures, most people will have no idea it wasn't you. They may even compliment you on your neat handwriting.

"In this day and age, people don't know your handwriting," Singer said. "They just register, 'Oh, I got their thank you note. That person did the right thing.'"

You can even arrange to have the notes mailed from your own city so it has a local postmark.

Elissa Emden of New York City used Singer to thank people who helped celebrate her son's 4th birthday and her daughter's 1st birthday.

"She composed the most well-written and personalized thank you notes, really as if you were writing it yourself. I wish she was around when I got married," said Emden, who admits that she didn't get all of her notes written to thank the 250 guests at her 2011 wedding.

The lost art of gratitude

Singer isn't the only option to outsource a handwritten thank you. There's also That's Gratitude, which says it can provide handwritten thank you notes for every occasion ranging from funerals to job interviews.

You can also get a robot to do it for you.

At companies such as Bond or Handwrytten, you type in your sentiment at a website, and mechanical scribes create what looks like something written by a human hand.

But should we be outsourcing a task that's supposed to have such a personal touch?

Reaction from local etiquette experts ranged from shock to "It's the thought that counts."

St. Paul etiquette expert Juliet Mitchell said paying someone else to do the thankless task shows that at least you cared to get it done. "It's the intent," she said. "You are taking the time to thank people."

Etiquette adviser Bethany Friske thinks outsourced thank you notes are in poor taste. "It takes out the personal touch," said Friske, who added that hiring a thank you note writer would be acceptable "if you have a hand malady and can't write."

Still, even she conceded that getting an outsourced note is better than no note at all. Friske said she went to five weddings last year, and has received only one thank you note.

"To some extent, I think it's sad," she said. "It's just the lost art of showing gratefulness."

iStock photo

WEEKEND: MUSIC

HITTING ALL THE RIGHT NOTES

BRIAN ACH, INVISION/AP

Saxophonist Tia Fuller, a fierce player and advocate for women in jazz, gets a shot at her first Grammy

BY MESFIN FEKADU • *Associated Press*

Saxophonist Tia Fuller was crying in bed. And praising God.

She'd just received the news that she was nominated for her first Grammy Award — but it's not just any nomination. Her inclusion in the best jazz instrumental album category is a historic moment for women because they have rarely been nominated for the coveted award throughout the Grammys' 61-year history.

If Fuller wins, she will become only the second woman to take home the prize.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 37

WEEKEND: MUSIC

FROM PAGE 36

"I feel really blessed. Anytime I think extensively about being in the category and (anything) Grammy-wise, I start tearing up," said Fuller, this time smiling ear-to-ear with light tears of joy in her eyes. "It's really a dream come true. I'm realizing that dreams can become reality and everything is tangible."

Her nominated album, "Diamond Cut," is a smooth and striking collection that has brought the skilled performer, who once played with Ray Charles during her college years and toured with Beyonce, to the next level. The album, her fifth, was produced by another woman making critical waves in jazz, Terri Lyne Carrington. The drummer, who came to national prominence decades ago in "The Arsenio Hall Show" band, became the first female to win best jazz instrumental album at the 2014 Grammys.

Carrington describes the win as bittersweet because of the "many great female instrumentalists that weren't nominated ever, so that was really disheartening."

"It just shows that there's a lot of work to do when it comes to gender equity in jazz and the music industry in general," she added.

It's one of the reasons Carrington, a three-time Grammy winner, is excited for Fuller's success and has been a mentor to the artist.

"I feel like this record is showing her growth and her evolution," Carrington said. "If nothing else, I believe that she's really motivated to keep pushing herself and keep evolving into all that she can be."

"Diamond Cut" is Fuller's first album in six years. She's been busy as a professor at the prestigious Berklee College of Music since 2013, and that decision to move to Boston to fulfill a lifetime dream came at a crossroads: In the same 24-hour period that Fuller was offered the teaching position, Beyonce asked Fuller to perform again with the band.

"That was the year I think they were doing the Super Bowl and she was going back out on tour," recalled Fuller, who performed with Beyonce from 2006 to 2010.

"While I was on tour with her something came over me and spoke, 'You have to move in faith and not fear. Don't be afraid of what may not happen, or get attached to the artificial result of, 'I'm playing with Beyonce,'" she said. "So the reason why that I ended up not going back is because I realized that it was time for me to move on."

Fuller's decision was very Beyonce-like: "She's always pressing forward. Always growing. Always evolving. ... I sat back and I just watched how she would never take 'no' for an answer. She would always find a 'yes.' And that's something that now, I've incorporated into me being a leader, a band leader, a businesswoman, a professor at Berklee, all of that."

Fuller, 42, who was born and raised in Aurora, Colo., has followed in the footsteps of her parents, who are also musicians and educators. Fuller first started playing the piano at age 3, then moved on to the flute. But once her grandfather handed her a saxophone, she was hooked.

"I was in the upper level of my parent's house, like the loft. I just remember how it reverberated throughout the house. I was like, 'Oh this is way better than flute. I can be loud.'"

"I FEEL REALLY BLESSED. ANYTIME I THINK EXTENSIVELY ABOUT BEING IN THE CATEGORY AND (ANYTHING) GRAMMY-WISE, I START TEARING UP."

Tia Fuller
saxophonist, on her Grammy nomination for best jazz instrumental album

BRIAN ACH, INVISION/AP

Fuller has been making noise ever since, and doesn't plan on slowing down. She wants to be a voice for women in jazz, especially instrumentalists, who don't get as much credit as the men.

"I'm representative of all of these women out here that are grinding. Terri (Lyne Carrington) served as that for me prior to me even knowing who she was. Seeing her on Arsenio Hall's show, and then of course hearing her name on the scene, watching her on different TV shows. That was an unspoken, internal narrative that spoke to me, 'She's doing it, you can do it,'" she said. "For me, I don't think it's necessarily a historical thing, but hopefully I'm a beacon of light for not only other women, but men, too. And also changing this inadvertent narrative, the male, patriarchal perspective in the jazz world, actually in the musical world. (Women) have always had just as much influence over the music."

Her career — and success — has not come without challenges: "I've dealt with sexism, inadvertent sexism, sometimes racism — sometimes a combination of both."

She recalls coming to New York in the early 2000s to build buzz as a performer, going from jazz club to jazz club to share her music and sound with listeners. "There was a long line of people, of course I'm the only woman up there, so I go onstage and I'm about to play and somebody just cuts me off and starts playing. That was like my first year. That was the first and last time that happened."

She's also faced people assuming she's dating a successful musician to justify her seat at the table, or "even club owners trying to hit on you, not taking you as serious."

Fuller has persevered, and she's using her role as a teacher to help change the narrative in jazz, and in music.

"I was directing a band full of young men. I'm like, 'What is your job and what is your role in this whole thing?' You can't just sit back passively," she said. "Accountability to me is key for not only women to hold men accountable, but for men to hold their brothers accountable."

In 2017, along with Carrington and 12 other female artists, Fuller developed We Have Voice, a collective that has created a code of conduct that performing arts venues, jazz festivals, schools and others have adopted. The goal, she said, is "to bring the level of consciousness up."

"I think slowly but surely we're doing the work and there is some shift happening," she said. "I especially see it with my students and the younger generation. That's something that's near and dear to my heart. I'm seeing the pain, psychological, physical, emotional pain that it's caused with women and sometimes men, too."

In between the teaching and playing, she's also busy dress shopping for her big day at the Grammys, taking place Feb. 10 in Los Angeles.

"I actually reached out to one of Beyonce's stylists and he responded, so he's going to help and connect me with some of his designers," she said. "I'm trying to find a healthy mix between making a statement and me being me."

REVIEW

Randy Houser

Magnolia (Stoney Creek)

You can hear Randy Houser really go for it on his new single, "What Whiskey Does."

He sets aside the laid-back, cool delivery that he, and so many country contemporaries, have embraced in recent years and pours his heart out, reaching for big, poignant notes that convey just how high the stakes are, aided by some aching harmonies from Hillary Lindsey, who co-wrote the song with Houser. The direction change is an announcement of sorts that Houser's new album, "Magnolia," won't be business as usual. In fact, it will be less music business-friendly than he has been since his breakout hit "How Country Feels" in 2013.

More than anything, "Magnolia" feels like Houser at his most authentic. He isn't chasing Chris Stapleton's outlaw-country, Americana train, even though that might have been his best career move.

Houser still drops in some hard-rock riffs and a bit of flash in songs like "Nothin' on You." Though his honky-tonk anthem "Whole Lotta Quit" is defiant fun, sometimes he still gets a bit too clever than he should on well-crafted, but emotion-lite tracks like "New Buzz" or "High Time."

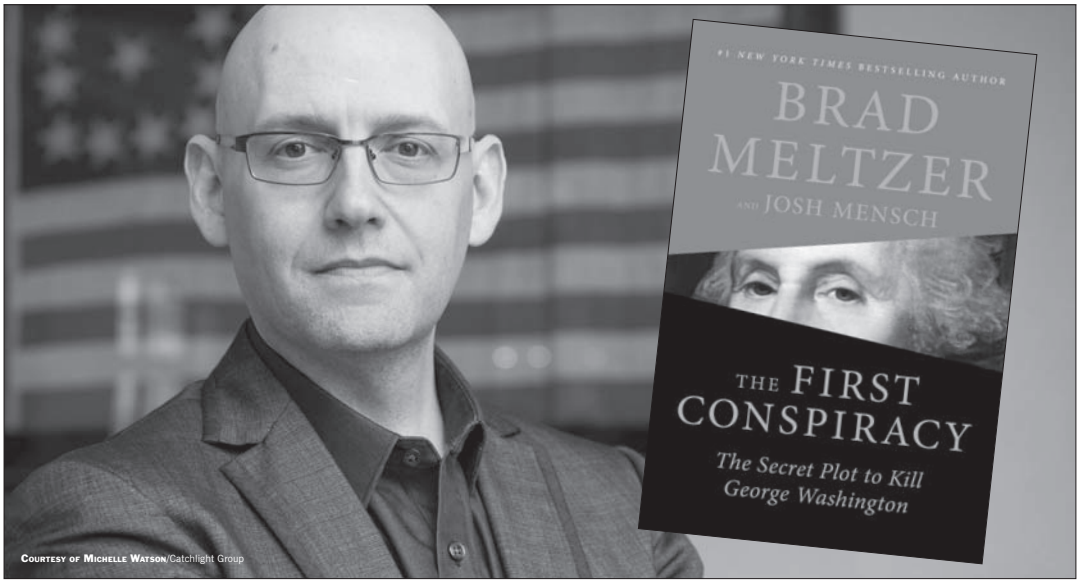
But, man, he yanks at every tear-jerking string on the gospel-tinged "No Good Place to Cry," with Houser belting out soulfully over an old-school blues guitar groove, as he confesses, "They don't want to see these tears in my eyes, but there ain't no good place to cry." It's a showstopper that puts Houser's career on a whole new level, a sign that his artistry is now more important than success.

He follows that with the wrenching "What Leaving Looks Like" and later on the lovely Louisiana road trip "Evangeline," where he talks about getting a little "two-lane crazy tonight."

These great surprises make "Magnolia" feel like a left-field debut, only one done by someone with enough experience to pull off every risk he takes.

— Glenn Gamboa
Newsday

WEEKEND: BOOKS



COURTESY OF MICHELLE WATSON/Catchlight Group

I WANT PEOPLE TO LOOK AT A SIDE OF HISTORY THEY'VE NEVER KNOWN ABOUT… WE ALL KNOW ABOUT THE REVOLUTION AND GEORGE WASHINGTON, BUT I PERSONALLY NEVER KNEW ABOUT A PLOT TO KILL HIM.

Stranger than fiction

Meltzer unravels secret plot on Washington in 'First Conspiracy'

BY OLINE H. COGDILL
The Sun Sentinel

Thriller writer Brad Meltzer is hoping his first nonfiction book, "The First Conspiracy: The Secret Plot to Kill George Washington," does for the United States' first president what Lin-Manuel Miranda has done for Alexander Hamilton, which was based on the 2005 book by Ron Chernow.

No, Meltzer isn't hoping for another musical about a Founding Father. "Washington's story doesn't really lend itself to a musical," said Meltzer. Nor would he ever see himself portraying Washington on any theater stage as Miranda did Hamilton.

Instead, he hopes "The First Conspiracy" similarly gives readers a fresh view of history and the people behind historical facts.

"I want people to look at a side of history they've never known about and in a way they've never seen. We all know about the Revolution and George Washington, but I personally never knew about a plot to kill him. What the book does is reveal Washington's character but also shows how history could have changed," Meltzer said.

"We're a country founded on legends and myths, and the ones we love the most are about our history. We love the idea that we were this ragtag group that came together and held hands and defeated the British fighting force that, at the time, was the greatest in the world to create this new country. That's a great story. But the truth is, we were far more divided as a country. The (different) regiments hated each other. We didn't even have the same uniforms."

Meltzer's fascination with history has been the basis of his 12 best-selling, high-concept thrillers. He also was the host of the television series "Brad Meltzer's Lost History" and "Brad Meltzer's Decoded."

His fiction focuses on arcane facts, those little known strange but real-life incidents that Meltzer weaves into his action-packed plots. And "The First Conspiracy" is chock with those unbelievable realities.

Set in 1776, "The First Conspiracy" concerns a handpicked group of soldiers who served as George Washington's bodyguards. Known as the "Life Guards," they had earned Washington's unwavering trust as the new country was being formed. But unknown to Washington, some members had switched sides. In the months before the Revolutionary War, these traitorous soldiers, as well as the governor of New York and mayor of New York City, hatched an assassination plot against Washington. When the plot was uncovered, Washington arrested the guilty parties and hanged one of the conspirators in front of 20,000 troops and citizens in an open field. It was the largest public execution of its time in all of North America. The arrest and execution happened days before the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Meltzer said he stumbled across the assassination plot about a decade ago when he was doing research for one of his thrillers. "It was where one finds the best details — in a footnote," he quipped. While he made a quick mention of the plot in his 2015 novel "The President's Shadow," the fact stayed on his mind. "I couldn't shake it. I kept asking myself 'Why doesn't anyone else know this story?' It was too good a story to let go. But I just couldn't find a plot that would fit."

Plunging into research, Meltzer teamed up with his friend and colleague Josh Mensch, who was the executive producer of the TV series "Lost History," and whose name is credited on the cover. They had an aha moment when they found the transcripts from the secret tribunal. "It was amazing to see it all written down. It wasn't like Indiana Jones running through the jungle. … This is all digitized, it's just that no one wants to read it. We read it," said Meltzer.

"We figured at best we would get a book, and, at worst, we'd have a little adventure," he added.

They got both, and a feel for Washington the man, the times leading up to the Revolutionary War and the struggling new United States. "The First Conspiracy" shows the emerging country "was as divided as we are now," said Meltzer.

"The reality is there were just as many (British) loyalists as there were patriots. Your neighbors could be your bitter enemies when it came to politics, as divided as we are now. Debauchery was rampant among the troops. Prostitution was immense. The alcohol proof in what they drank was so much higher than what we drink now. George Washington hated all this. He outlawed gambling in the military. He didn't want anyone drinking alcohol who was in the military. He wanted us to be better than all that. He wanted us to truly be the United States. He wanted to bring a sense of decency and honesty to a military that was crumbling around him. We see George Washington on the money every day, but this shows him as a person."

WEEKEND: TELEVISION & DVD

NEW ON DVD

"The Bookshop": Director/writer Isabel Coixet's ("Learning to Drive") adaptation of Penelope Fitzgerald's 1978 novel has the feel of a book collecting dust on the back shelf of a closet. There's an expectation of great potential considering the lineage, but on closer examination, the experience teeters on tedium so much it ends up a mystery of what the draw was in the first place.

A widow (Emily Mortimer) takes a major emotional and financial leap in 1959 to open a bookshop in the conservative coastal town of Hardborough, Suffolk. She opens her bookstore as a loving tribute to her dead husband. But it is met with resistance.

This unfolds in a production that is melancholy in mood, arthritic in movement and emotionally stagnant. The only saving grace is the beautiful performances by Mortimer and Bill Nighy.

Saban Films

John Travolta stars in the somewhat biographical "Speed Kills," now on DVD.

"Speed Kills": John Travolta's film career continues to sink slowly into the cinematic sunset. His latest starring role is in "Speed Kills," the pseudo-biographical tale of real-life boat racing champion and master salesman Don Aronow (changed to Ben Aronoff in the film). The offering is such a shipwreck, the name change ends up being a way to protect the innocent.

Decades ago, Travolta would have been perfect for the role as Aronoff is a major player who charms everyone he meets. Travolta played such a role beautifully in 1998's "Primary Colors" as Gov. Jack Stanton. But the twinkle that was once in Travolta's eye has been replaced by a look of desperation to find a good role. There's no self-confidence or energy in his performance.

Also available on DVD:

"Jonathan": Bill Oliver's directorial debut is the tale of two brothers who live inside the same body.

"NOVA: Flying Supersonic": A look at the international race to develop the world's first supersonic airliner, the Concorde.

"Old Man and the Gun": Robert Redford stars in this mostly true story of Forrest Tucker, who at 70 escaped from prison and robbed several banks.

"Untouchable": An examination of the legal and social system's treatment of sexual offenders in the United States.

"Halloween": A woman has waited 40 years for Michael Myers to return. Jamie Lee Curtis stars.

"Obsession": Brian De Palma's 1976 film looks at two marriages that lead to similar kidnappings.

"The Plague of the Zombies": An evil presence lurks within the darkness of a remote 19th-century Cornish village.

"Goosebumps 2: Haunted Halloween": Two best friends open a locked book that frees a supernatural nightmare.

"Cliffhanger": The Sylvester Stallone action film is being rereleased to mark the 25th anniversary.

"Bigger": Brothers spark an international interest in bodybuilding.

"Once Upon a Deadpool": This is a softer version of the feature film "Deadpool 2" — much of the language and violence has been changed to get a PG-13 rating.

— Rick Bentley/Tribune News Service

Netflix

"Tidying Up with Marie Kondo" brings the Japanese home organizer's tips to the small screen.

Kondo's war on clutter continues

Japanese organizer helping homeowners spark joy on Netflix

By Hank Stuever
The Washington Post

The war on clutter continues. In previous reality-TV skirmishes with America's junk-filled closets and overstuffed garages, shows about clear-cut cleaning tried to sass and snark people into a state of tidiness.

Now it's Marie Kondo to the rescue in Netflix's happily engaging new reality series, "Tidying Up with Marie Kondo," now streaming on Netflix.

If you haven't heard of Kondo, a successful Japanese home organizer, then you've probably been buried under a mound of still-tagged bargains from T.J. Maxx and Kohl's.

The rest of us already know (and perhaps adhere to) the principles detailed in Kondo's international bestseller, "The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up," which advocates a five-step "KonMari" approach to evaluating one's belongings on an emotional level.

If an object does not "spark joy" (in Kondo's terms), it probably needs to go.

"Tidying Up" puts Kondo's methods to the test in eight Los Angeles-area homes, starting with that of Kevin and Rachel, whose situation seems most common: Two married adults with busy careers and two small children, not enough space and not enough time or energy left at the end of the day to stay ahead of the stuff they own.

Kondo, who is in her early 30s and also has two young children, arrives at her clients' houses (accompanied by her translator, Marie Iida) full of squeaky, irresistibly cute enthusiasm, greeting their engorged closets and chaotic junk drawers with giddy discovery. "I love mess," she declares.

Unlike her TV predecessors, Kondo brings a calming influence to the surroundings — even asking the owners if she may take a moment to kneel and silently greet their homes.

Sometimes she asks the homeowners to join in and offer unspoken thanks to their home for the shelter it has thus far provided.

This is a noble and overdue concept for the home makeover and real estate genre — a chance to express gratitude for any home, rather than the perfect home. Years of HGTV's programming have placed homeowners and home-seekers on a narcissistic pedestal of entitled complaint (our house is too small, too ugly, too outdated) and criticisms.

> **This is a noble and overdue concept for the home makeover and real estate genre — a chance to express gratitude for any home, rather than the perfect home.**

The gratitude extends to Kondo's lessons in culling.

Once Rachel has dragged a few closets' worth of her massive, mostly casual wardrobe and piled everything on the bed, per Kondo's instructions, she is asked to "thank" an item of clothing before discarding it.

It's a long process, topped off with Kondo's insistence that the remaining T-shirts, underwear and socks be folded into consistent rectangular shapes that line up in drawers like cute, obedient children.

Herein lies the happiness. You might not immediately run to your dresser to duplicate it, but you'll be tempted.

Kondo's journey continues to other families and couples facing various anxieties about their mess.

Margie, recently widowed, confronts a closet full of her late husband's clothes.

A male couple, Frank and Matt, seek Kondo's help tidying their shared L.A. apartment as a way of asserting their adulthood, especially for family members who still think of them as young slobs.

Clarissa and Mario are expecting their first baby and must reckon with a surfeit of clothes, especially his stacks of collectible sneakers and athletic shoes, many of which he bought with no intention of wearing.

And Ron and Wendy, empty-nesters married 42 years, must tackle layers of accumulation, including the dreaded Christmas decorations and decades' worth of baseball cards.

To her credit, Kondo is not a makeover artist. She effuses over any form of progress, happy to overlook matters of taste and decor. As such, "Tidying Up" isn't filled with the sort of visually appealing reveals that viewers expect from other home-improvement shows.

It's also worth noting that "Tidying Up" is so relentlessly encouraging that it cannot bring itself to feature a failure, such as a homeowner who gives up in the middle of the process. It can sometimes feel as if Kondo and her producers settle for small victories without addressing some of the homeowners' personal issues that still simmer just beneath the surface.

She's here to tidy up and spark joy, which ultimately includes a bit of glossing-over. The joyless, Judgey McJudgerson stuff is left to viewers like you and me, and Lord knows, we've watched enough reality TV to easily pick up that slack.

PHOTOS BY KARL MERTON FERRON/The Baltimore Sun

Air Force Staff Sgt. Joe Jamison, left, and Navy Lt. Jen Vaughn participate in a class for military members at the Yoga Center of Columbia, Md., on Nov. 30.

Yoga instructors tailor teachings to military, vets

BY MIKE KLINGAMAN
The Baltimore Sun

In 2009, Lt. Jen Vaughn was at war — with herself. Or so it seemed to the then-32-year-old Naval officer.

"I was going through some pretty tough stuff — a divorce and a series of deaths in the family, including a suicide," said Vaughn, of Laurel, Md. "The state of the world, and all that was going on, made things worse. I didn't deal with the stress well; I needed an escape."

She tried yoga. That first class, she burst out crying. The sailor who had patrolled the Mediterranean during the Kosovo Campaign, and chased pirates off the African Coast, lay on her mat, bawling. In a good way.

"Yoga calmed my mind and showed that it's OK to take 10 minutes to 'connect to my breath,'" Vaughn said. "It saved my life."

Vaughn is among a number of warriors to embrace yoga as a therapeutic tool to treat pain and stress. Moreover, Uncle Sam has their backs. A 2017 study by the Rand Corp. reported that four out of five military health care facilities in the U.S. now offer nonconventional on-site treatments, including yoga.

At Fort Meade, the central Maryland U.S. Army base home to 14,500 military personnel, "yoga is very well respected and often advocated," said Col. Beverly Maliner, chief of preventive medicine services. "It's pretty well documented that meditation helps people with pain of any kind, including PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), and yoga fits into that rubric very well."

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, PTSD affects between 10 and 20 percent of veterans deployed in recent wars.

Yoga also benefits noncombatants who live in a hurry-up world, said Maliner, who ascribes to the practice herself.

"Military life is a busy, high-intensity environment where the focus is always external," she said. "Yoga gives us tools to learn how to breathe and to go internal, so we can better cope with our daily demands — and recover."

Each Thursday, Lomax arrives at Fort Meade where, for 90 minutes, she teaches yoga to a cadre of servicemembers. Standing and lying on latex mats, they stretch and bend in ways that would make Gumby cringe, morphing into rhythmic postures called The Baby Cobra, The Puppy and The Gate. One pose recalls Michael Phelps, poised for takeoff; another evokes sprinter Usain Bolt, crouched at the starting blocks.

> **'Yoga calmed my mind and showed that it's OK to take 10 minutes to "connect to my breath." It saved my life.'**
>
> **Navy Lt. Jen Vaughn**

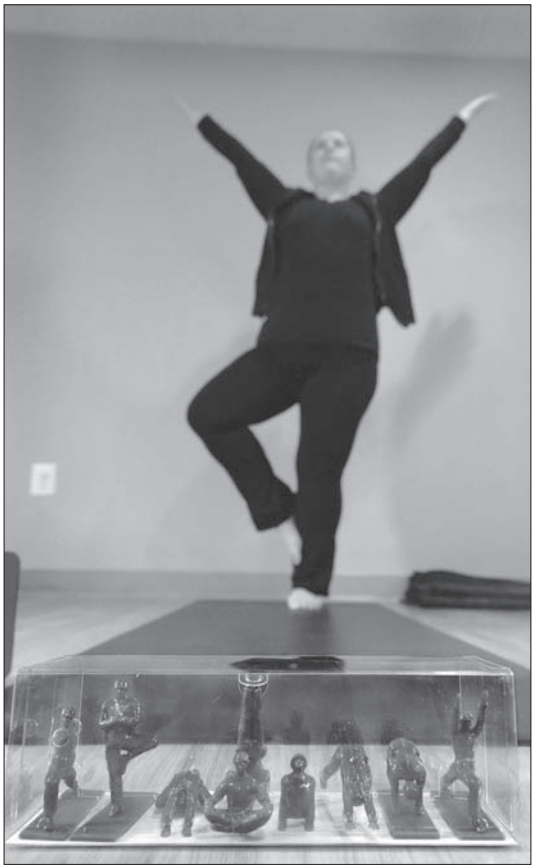
All the while, Lomax coaxes her charges in a soothing, hypnotic voice.

"Let go of the outside world," she said. "Bring your awareness to yourself, how it feels to be in your body and to connect to the earth."

Lomax began teaching the class in 2015 and has taught about 400 warriors to date. At 69, she executes all of the poses herself on a 4-foot-10 frame that should melt alongside a strapping Marine. Not so. On the mat, she's a poster child for a Twister game.

"I'm short and squatty, which is good for yoga," Lomax said.

A retired financial policy analyst with the federal government, she is a certified instructor for Warriors At Ease, a nonprofit that educates those who want to teach yoga to the military. In November, she trained 60 members of the 55th Signal Company, a combat camera unit, prior to their deployment.



G.I. Joe figures in yoga poses rest at the feet of Emily Jamison at the yoga center.

"Two of the guys came in, thinking they were the bees' knees. One was doing a headstand, to show off, when I arrived," Lomax said. She ignored them and, for an hour, challenged the group "to get their energy out."

Afterward, the soldiers conceded the session was tough.

The job is a passion for Lomax, who works gratis.

"These men and women work so hard, under such pressure, and they never speak of anything but work," she said. "They go overseas to Afghanistan and come back but never talk about that fight-or-flight mode; they're not in a good place. Anyone being deployed has a risk of being exploded; it's horrible stress."

Her goal: Get each warrior's body to take a deep breath.

There are dangers in learning yoga, Maliner said, most involving careless instructors.

"I took a class, off-base, where we were asked to do a lotus pose (sitting cross-legged). It's a risky position, and I dislocated my knee," she said. "Yoga is not a magic bullet; it takes discipline and daily practice under the tutelage of teachers like Lomax, who minimizes the risks."

For two years, Air Force Staff Sgt. Joe Jamison has trained with Lomax. A cyberwarfare planner at Fort Meade, he sought a remedy for the ills of sitting at a desk for hours on end in a hush-hush, high-stress job.

"I quickly learned the problems I had with my body's alignment, balance and posture — and it echoed out to other parts of my general well being," said Jamison, 26. "Yoga helps me to focus in a more targeted way and to tackle my daily challenges better. You feel different when you're able to sit and breathe properly."

Now retired after 22 years in the Navy, Vaughn attends Lomax's class while earning her Warriors At Ease teaching certificate.

"Yoga has been a joy for me, and I want to give back," she said. Recovering from back surgery in October for a service-related injury, Vaughn spurns narcotics for the pain.

"Yoga has taught me you can breathe through anything," she said.

Vaughn wants to pass on that prescription.

"It's important to take care of the entire war-fighting machine, which is what every soldier and sailor is. You've got to take care of the whole package," she said. "I mean, you can't just put gasoline in a car; there are other things you need to do to maintain its overall performance. Like changing the oil. And kicking the tires every once in awhile."

WEEKEND: FAMILY

iStock photo

TOUGH TOPICS

7 tips to remember when awkward conversations with kids inevitably arise

By Robyn Silverman
Special to The Washington Post

A friend recently divulged to me that her 8-year-old daughter had started asking her about death. "Am I going to die? Are you going to die? WHEN?" My friend, taken off guard, changed the subject to something much more palatable: "Who wants ice cream?"

Talking to kids about tough topics is never easy. Whether the topic is sex, porn, divorce, drugs, technology, school shootings, body image or death, it's normal for parents to fumble for the right words or push the talk off for some elusive "better time."

Still, we don't want to leave our children's education and understanding of these topics to the internet, a friend, or some random kid on the bus, do we? So we must have the discussions in order for our children to have the information they need from a source that they (and, frankly, we) can trust.

When talking about tough topics with children, here are 7 things parents need to know:

It's never one big talk but a series of little ones throughout childhood. While people often refer to some of these "rites of passage" conversations with a capitalized "The," as in "The Sex Talk" or "The Drugs and Alcohol Talk," it's really not one talk at all. Each of these important ongoing discussions should start early in a child's life in age-appropriate terms and then build and get more detailed in subsequent dialogues over the young person's childhood. So if these kinds of talks make you feel uncomfortable, you'll have a lot of time to get more relaxed while having them.

You don't need to know all the answers. Some parents tell me that they don't know enough technical or statistical information about a topic. Other times, they get stymied about how to answer a complicated question. You don't need to know it all. At any point, if your child asks you something that you don't know how to answer, you can stop and look it up, phone a friend or simply ask for some time to think about it.

You can admit that it's awkward or hard to explain. After coaching calls or presentations, some parents will quip, "Can I just have you come over and have this discussion for me? I can't say those words you said because it's too awkward!" I get it. It can be uncomfortable to discuss porn, sex or death with your children and it can be triggering to talk about heated issues like school shootings or divorce. You can admit this and point out that even though it's not easy, it's important enough to have the conversation anyway.

You are the right person to discuss these topics. There's a reason you, as your child's parent, are the best person to convey this information rather than a random educator, a book or some website — you know your child best! You know what your child can handle, you can read his/her tone and you can ensure that the conversation stays age-appropriate. You love your child and want it to go well and you will be there for your child for follow-up questions and emotional reactions to the discussion. While there is no "perfect person" to engage in these tough talks with your child, there is no need for perfect when you keep the door open, stay present and respond to your child's concerns and inquiries with sensitivity and honesty.

It's not a soliloquy. Remember, you are not conversing with yourself. There is no need to prepare a monologue. These conversations are exchanges between two (or more) people in which there is just as much listening as there is talking. Allow your child to ask questions and give yourself permission to ask questions as well. Provide room for silence, contemplation and connection.

You can think about it first. Sometimes we are able to broach a topic with our child that begins on our terms. For example, you might need to tell your child that you and your spouse are getting a divorce or that a family member has passed away. Other times, the child introduces a conversation in the car, at dinnertime or before bed that seems to come out of left field. There you are, brushing your teeth or stirring the pasta and your child surprises you with "what does the f-word mean?" or "is Grandma going to die?" When caught off guard, it's all right to say; "I want to answer you. Give me a few minutes to collect my thoughts and we can talk about it over some cocoa, okay?"

You can have a do-over. When presenting to a large group of parents and educators, I told a story about how I answered my daughter when she innocently said, at age 4, that I had a "fat butt." It was a moment that could have gone horribly wrong, but after taking a moment, we wound up having a memorable conversation about the amazing things our bodies can do and how all bodies are beautiful. I could feel my audience holding its breath. I said, "Now you might be thinking, 'oh crap! I said the wrong thing when my kid and I had that conversation!'" Everyone laughed. Yes, we all mess up. I've put my foot in my mouth as well. We all have! But the thing is, every day is a new day to try again. If you look back and think; "I could have said that better," go back and say it better! Parenting is the ultimate do-over.

The funny thing is that these tough talks seem toughest right before we have them. The anticipation of discussing sex, porn, death or other sensitive topics can make our stomachs clench and our hands feel clammy. But once we are in the conversations, something beautiful happens. Our children open up. We connect. The conversations become easier.

And the biggest payoff? Our children know that we are willing to be the person they come to when they have a question or concern — no matter what the topic. We earn our position as a trusted source. And if you are brave enough to have these conversations during the early years, when the stakes are low, you will be fortunate enough to be the person your child comes to later on, when the stakes are high. That will make the discomfort all worth it.

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari

Why we relish tales of airport meltdowns

Last week, TV networks aired a viral video of an airline customer melting down. These videos surface every few months — a woman's tirade over a $20 baggage fee in Memphis, an irate doctor's dramatic arrest in Orlando, a Spirit passenger ranting in the isle after her plane was diverted, and a mother losing her cool after her family's flight to catch a Disney cruise was delayed 12 hours. Last week's viral video featured a woman body-slamming the gate kiosk after her JetBlue flight was canceled, while screaming epithets and calling the attendant a rapist.

Lovely.

Why do we have a sick fascination with watching seemingly normal citizens lose control? I figure we must secretly enjoy seeing irate customers berating airline employees for the delays, cancellations and exorbitant costs we've all experienced. Hasn't everyone on the planet been frustrated with air travel?

And now, as rumors circulate about longer TSA lines due to the government shutdown, thumbs are hovering over cellphone record buttons as air travel causes more customers to unexpectedly reach the end of their ropes.

My last flight was pretty standard, with the requisite number of aggravations now expected of air travel. Providence to Pittsburgh — a veritable hop, skip and jump in the whole grand scheme of things. But distance traveled is not equally proportional to the level of inconvenience experienced at the airport facility. In other words, no matter where I fly, I know it will be a fiasco.

It started at the TSA lines, where I awkwardly met eyes with the same 20 people every time we zigzagged past each other toward security screening. Thirty minutes later, I'd formed a silent kinship with them. In the microcosm of airport society, they were my friends. At the end of the line, I bid them adieu and nervously moved to the next, intimidating step: TSA check-in.

The TSA agent looked from my documentation to my face to my ID, making me feel like a fugitive wanted for heinous crimes. I feared that TSA German shepherds might sense my natural guilt complex and attack, but somehow I passed and was directed to the security screening conveyor belts.

Nothing says humility like a TSA security screening line. Everyone tried to act nonchalant as we fumbled for gray plastic bins. We wanted to appear to be savvy travelers, but we were all made uneasy by the indignity of the process. I scrambled to remember the complicated rules: Do I remove my jacket in addition to my shoes and belt? If my laptop has to be in a bin by itself, does my phone get its own bin too? Will that packet of ketchup in my purse be flagged as liquid? Will the screener think my hairdryer is a gun?

I stood, legs spread and arms over my head, in the futuristic metal detector as an exhaled puff blew my hair into the air. The lady behind me was selected for a random pat-down. I tried not to gawk. We retrieved our bins, and as my comrades and I put our shoes and belts back on, I felt like we'd had an uncomfortable one-night stand.

I stopped to get a cup of coffee on my way to my gate, but the Dunkin' Donuts line was longer than the one at TSA. Turns out, I had plenty of time. My flight was delayed two hours due to a flight attendant calling in sick at the last minute.

The large latte soon hit my bladder and I went in search of restrooms. Heeding the prohibition against leaving bags unattended, I muscled my wheeled carry-on into the stall, only to realize that I'd dipped the sleeve of my jacket into the toilet in the process.

Thanks to a calming '80s mix emanating from invisible speakers in the terminal, broadcasting obscure oldies like "I Wanna Be A Cowboy" and "Sidewalk Talk," I made it to Pittsburgh that day without losing my cool. However, long hours of confusion, inconvenience, boredom and frustration will inevitably bring even the sanest of us to the brink.

So expect air travel to be a hassle, and always keep your phone charged and camera at the ready.

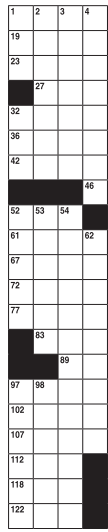
Read more of Lisa Smith Molinari's columns at: themeatandpotatoesoflife.com
Email: meatandpotatoesoflife@googlemail.com

WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

PARLOR TRICKS

BY ANDY KRAVIS / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ



ACROSS

1 Locale for a bottom feeder
7 Relinquish
11 Total nerdburger
16 The Mormon Church, for short
19 Having come apart
20 Company with a Roman centurion logo, informally
21 Name shouted at the end of the "Flintstones" closing theme song
22 I.S.P. option
23 At the ice cream parlor, the grand marshal ordered a …
25 R&B's ____ Brothers
26 Effort
27 Atoms
28 Weak-minded type
30 Something lost in old literature
32 Airline to Ben Gurion Airport
33 Water
35 Sites with corporate names, often
36 Low-status, as work
38 Govt. org. under Homeland Security
39 The confirmed bachelor ordered a …
42 The crossing guard ordered a …
45 See 46-Across
46 With 45-Across, focus directly on hitting someone
47 Accident investigation org.
49 Navigational aid, for short
50 Actress Aniston, in the tabloids
52 God, in Rastafarianism
55 "Get ____!"
57 Winds, as videotape
59 Frequent co-star of Mastroianni
61 "Frozen" snowman
63 Question of doubt
65 How many verbs in Esperanto are irregular
66 Premium Cuban cigar brand
67 The amateur singer ordered a …
70 The dental hygienist ordered a …
72 Radicchio relative
73 Smelly
75 Amtrak stops: Abbr.
76 What an auctioneer's gavel indicates
77 In a way
78 Home planet of TV's ALF
80 Planted
82 Rapper who founded the record label Mass Appeal
83 Japanese drama
84 Slippery, say
85 ____-free
87 Friendly greeting on the highway
89 Wine from central Tuscany
92 The Apollo Theater usher ordered a …
97 The pastry chef ordered a …
100 Eastern philosophy
101 Ocular socket
102 Simpson with the 2004 hit "Pieces of Me"
103 Arthur who composed "The Yeomen of the Guard"
106 Approximately
107 All out
110 Won
111 Without alteration
112 Filming locale
113 Places for cheap drinks
115 And the homebody ordered an …
118 "We'll teach you to drink deep ____ you depart": Hamlet
119 Stores with Småland play areas
120 Perspicacious
121 Fishing sites
122 Director Guillermo ____ Toro
123 Earth
124 Beaux-____
125 Vaporize

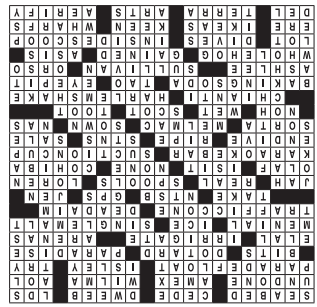
DOWN

1 Elided greeting
2 One who facilitates self-destructive behavior
3 Supermodel Lima
4 Marina apparatus
5 Stops
6 It can symbolize an open mouth in an 8-Down
7 Kind of intake, to a nutritionist
8 See 6-Down
9 Some narcs
10 What "X" may stand for
11 Bad thing on a motorist's record, for short
12 Pufflet
13 First name of the First Lady of Song
14 Some sights in Oz
15 Where many Golden State Warriors fans live
16 Like much of the Western Hemisphere
17 Along the back
18 Most foxy
24 Pres. who signed the Glass-Steagall Act
29 Rehab affliction, for short
31 Bulbous, narrow-necked bottles
32 Lifesaver, for short
33 Successful presidential slogan of old
34 ____ al-Fitr (holiday marking the close of Ramadan)
37 Miles away
40 Fails (to)
41 Problems of amnesia
43 Stop
44 Channel with highlights
48 Angry chorus
51 Annual science fiction award
52 Isn't serious
53 Family support group
54 Vegas establishment with a giant guitar sign
56 Writing of W. S. Gilbert
58 Weight
59 English facilities
60 Scruffs
62 Country singer with the No. 1 albums "Breathe" and "Cry"
64 Follow closely
66 Females whose gender identities match their gender assignments at birth
68 Some gametes
69 Tach readings
71 Savings vehicle, in brief
74 A pop
78 ____ rea (intent to commit a crime)
79 Winter garment insert
81 Likely to butt in
84 Pay up?
86 Toy to keep track of?
88 What "goes to" a movie star
90 "That's really important to me"
91 T.S.A. requirements
93 Some counterculture gatherings
94 Theoretical
95 Dismissal, slangily
96 W.W. II arena
97 Had a good cry
98 Like sailors on leave
99 8: Abbr.
104 Soviet space dog of 1957
105 Contribute
108 No longer bothered by
109 Manual selection
111 Eponym of the Courage Award given at the ESPYs
114 Fed. agcy. founded by 24-Down
116 ____ Beach, Hawaii
117 "Gangnam Style" rapper

GUNSTON STREET

"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com. Online: gunstonstreet.com.

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE



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FACES

Carell part of 'Space Force' comedy series

From wire services

Get ready for "The Office" meets "Star Trek."

If you thought President Trump's announcement last year that he wanted to launch a Space Force to carry out military operations in outer space sounded like a joke, you weren't alone. Created by Steve Carell and Greg Daniels — the star and developer of the Emmy-winning sitcom "The Office" — a "Space Force" workplace comedy series is coming to Netflix soon.

Carell

Carell is set to star in and executive produce the show, but there's no word yet on what character he'll play or the exact release date.

"On June 18, 2018, the federal government announced the creation of a 6th major division of the United States armed forces," a Wednesday trailer from Netflix reads. "The goal of the new branch is 'to defend satellites from attack' and 'perform other space-related tasks.' Or something. This is the story of the men and women who have to figure it out."

Other news

■ A horror movie called **"Happy Death Day 2U"** is getting a new release date following complaints its original release date coincided with the Parkland, Fla., school shooting anniversary. Universal Pictures said Wednesday that the film's North American release would be moved from Feb. 14 to Feb. 13.

■ A best-selling author and former Boston Globe reporter is writing a book about the September 11 terrorist attacks. **Mitchell Zuckoff's** "Fall and Rise: The Story of 9/11" will be released April 30, HarperCollins Publishing announced Thursday.

■ **Gladys Knight,** an Atlanta native and seven-time Grammy Award winner, will sing "The Star-Spangled Banner" at this year's Super Bowl on Feb. 3.

■ **Mary Oliver,** a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet who wrote rapturous odes to nature and animal life, died Thursday at age 83.

Christina Ricci
Pascal Le Segretain, Getty Images/TNS

Legacy role

Ricci's search for parts to be proud of leads to 'Nellie Bly'

By Rick Bentley
Tribune News Service

The way Christina Ricci has selected acting roles over the past four years is a lot different than the way she had before. Her perspective changed when her son was born in 2014.

"Now that I have a child, it is very important to me that the legacy I leave for him is one that he can be proud of. That is the big influence my child has had on me," Ricci, 38, says. "I understand what I do really matters and that I should face every choice knowing that it will matter."

Ricci is starring in the Lifetime movie "Escaping the Madhouse: The Nellie Bly Story." The film is based on the true story of how Nellie Bly went undercover at the notorious Women's Lunatic Asylum at the end of the 19th century to expose the abuse of patients.

Bly's actions as a trailblazing investigative journalist resulted in massive reforms.

One of the things Ricci says she respected about Bly was her intelligence.

"It's kind of incredible that she put herself in this situation," Ricci says. "There's an extreme naivete to her, but she survives this whole thing. She has to be smart or she would not have survived."

Ricci started acting when she was 10 years old. By the time she was 18, she'd been in 19 feature films, including starring roles in "Casper" and "The Addams Family."

Ricci is proud of a lot of the work she has done, but says it warped her perspective.

"It wasn't until I found love and had my child that I was able to understand the basic things that life is supposed to be all about," Ricci says. "I didn't feel like I had any meaning in my life because I was a child and this fame thing was put on me. ... I grew up to believe life was so empty and meaningless because fame is so empty and meaningless. It wasn't until I really understood life was about love and the meaning of having a child that I started to heal."

As for how she will handle it if her son shows an interest in acting at an early age, Ricci knows exactly what she will say.

"When it is time for him to have a career, he can have any career he wants," Ricci says. She pauses and then adds, "But he is to be a child until his 18th birthday."

McConaughey, Rogen, Wilde films enhance SXSW fest lineup

By Mark Olsen
Los Angeles Times

The past few years have been especially strong for the South By Southwest Film Festival. Having established itself as a home for breakout comedies including "Bridesmaids" and "Knocked Up," SXSW expanded its hit-making track record last year as the launching pad for "A Quiet Place" and "Ready Player One."

But the more audience-friendly commercial bent to its programming also serves as a way to spotlight the festival's longer-running mission of showcasing offbeat independent films, as seen in its feature film lineup announced Wednesday.

"Us," Jordan Peele's follow-up to his Oscar-winning "Get Out," was previously announced as the festival's opening night film and remains the big-ticket item. Other high-profile titles range from "The Beach Bum," Harmony Korine's long-awaited follow-up to 2012's "Spring Breakers," starring Matthew McConaughey, Snoop Dogg, Isla Fisher, Jimmy Buffet, Zac Efron and Martin Lawrence, to an untitled Lionsgate comedy from "50/50" director Jonathan Levine starring Seth Rogen and Charlize Theron as a diplomat and a journalist attempting to keep their romance a secret.

"We don't program with an eye towards box office. We certainly like popular work, we're not against it; it's just not the goal," said Janet Pierson, the festival's director of film, this week. "We're looking for work that we respond to on a lot of levels."

Pierson said the festival is encouraged knowing that they can make a difference for established figures as well as the kind of low-budget discoveries for which SXSW is also known.

"Of course, the 'Krishas' and 'Thunder Roads' and 'Weekends' we live for, discoveries that come out of nowhere and that people make out of nothing," Pierson said. "Those are really the dream, but when you see people who also have a lot of choices and have been working in the Hollywood system, to realize that you can make a difference in their lives and in their work that really matters to them, is very fulfilling."

Actress Olivia Wilde makes her directorial debut with this year's SXSW title "Booksmart." The story of two graduating high school students who realize they didn't make enough time for fun and attempt to do as much as they can in one night stars Kaitlyn Dever, Beanie Feldstein, Jessica Williams, Will Forte, Lisa Kudrow and Jason Sudeikis.

The full lineup is available on the festival's website. This year's festival takes place March 8-17 in Austin, Texas.

STARS AND STRIPES

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Stars and Stripes (USPS 0417900) is published weekdays (except Dec. 25 and Jan. 1) for 50 cents Monday through Thursday and for $1 on Friday by Pacific Stars and Stripes, Unit 45002, APO AP 96301-5002. Periodicals postage paid at San Francisco, CA, Postmaster: Send address changes to Pacific Stars and Stripes, Unit 45002, APO AP 96301-5002.

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OPINION

Trump's Syria policies leave GIs exposed

By Max Boot
The Washington Post

"How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?" I thought of John Kerry's words from 1971 when I heard the terrible news Wednesday about the death of four U.S. soldiers and the wounding of three others in a suicide bombing in Manbij, Syria. In the present instance, however, you would have to amend the quote to say: "How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a war supposedly won?"

On Dec. 19, recall, President Donald Trump announced the withdrawal of roughly 2,000 U.S. troops from Syria with these words: "We have defeated ISIS in Syria, my only reason for being there during the Trump Presidency." This was news to analysts, who pointed to intelligence reports that, while Islamic State has lost most of its territorial control, it still had some 30,000 fighters in Iraq and Syria, making it one of the largest and most dangerous terrorist groups on the planet.

Under criticism from his own party, Trump backtracked slightly, announcing on Jan. 7, "We will be leaving at a proper pace while at the same time continuing to fight ISIS and doing all else that is prudent and necessary!" Apparently all this meant was that withdrawal would now take four months rather than one. On Friday, the pullout began with the removal of the first U.S. equipment, if not yet personnel, from Syria. On Wednesday, Vice President Mike Pence, eager to play Little Jeff to Trump's Jeff Dunham, faithfully announced: "The caliphate has crumbled and ISIS has been defeated." This was after the terrible news from Syria, which in one day has tripled the total number of fatalities (now up to six) suffered by U.S. forces in Syria.

It is impossible to say why ISIS struck now, except that it could. But there is little doubt that the announced U.S. withdrawal gives the terrorists an inducement to attack. Gayle Tzemach Lemmon, a colleague of mine at the Council on Foreign Relations, writes about a recent trip to Syria in Foreign Affairs. She notes that the U.S. troop presence in towns such as Raqqa and Manbij was virtually invisible yet highly significant. Two female university students she met in Raqqa told her that the Americans "provided the invisible force field that kept ISIS down and the Russians, Iranians, and Turks at bay."

Now the force field is dissolving, and all the regional actors are rushing in to try to fill the vacuum. ISIS has an incentive to attack U.S. troops to claim credit for their withdrawal and to demonstrate that it remains undefeated. We will see now what the other regional actors do, but it is unlikely to be what Washington wants.

Aware of the danger that the Turks would massacre the United States' Kurdish allies, Trump's national security adviser, John Bolton, tried to obtain assurances from Ankara that the Kurds would be protected. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan offered no such assurances. But the pullout went ahead anyway behind a smokescreen of bluster. Trump tweeted Sunday: "Starting the long overdue pullout from Syria while hitting the little remaining ISIS territorial caliphate hard, and from many directions. Will attack again from existing nearby base if it reforms. Will devastate Turkey economically if they hit Kurds. Create 20 mile safe zone …"

This type of empty threat is worse than useless, because it undermines whatever scant credibility America has left. How could the United States "devastate" Turkey, a NATO ally that is our 34th-largest supplier of imported goods and 28th-largest export market? How could the United States create a "safe zone" without any troops on the ground to enforce it? And how could the United States use a "nearby base" to keep ISIS from re-forming? President Barack Obama tried that very strategy after he pulled U.S. troops out of Iraq in 2011. The United States had lots of nearby bases in countries such as Turkey and Kuwait, but they could not slow the rise of ISIS. Only the dispatch of U.S. troops back to Iraq in 2014 could liberate territory from ISIS control.

Now we see many of the same conditions that led to the rise of ISIS in the first place, with a power vacuum on the Syrian side of the border and an increasingly disaffected Sunni population on the Iraqi side. The outlook in Mosul, which ISIS captured in 2014 and lost in 2017, is bleak, with little reconstruction assistance from a Shiite-dominated government in Baghdad. Shiite militias hold sway across the Sunni Triangle in Iraq, report my Washington Post colleagues, with militiamen engaging in "mafia-like practices" and "deciding which Sunni families are allowed to return to their homes following battles against the Islamic State."

Eastern Syria had, until now, been an island of stability thanks to the U.S. alliance with the Syrian Democratic Forces. The U.S. achieved outsize strategic returns for a small troop investment. But now Trump appears determined to fritter away those hard-won gains. And in the process of pulling out, he leaves U.S. soldiers who are tasked with carrying out his incoherent policy fatally exposed.

Washington Post columnist Max Boot is the Jeane J. Kirkpatrick senior fellow for national security studies at the Council on Foreign Relations and author of "The Road Not Taken: Edward Lansdale and the American Tragedy in Vietnam."

May's plan rejected, but hard Brexit might be worse

By George F. Will
Washington Post Writers Group

LONDON

The poet Rupert Brooke voiced the exhilaration of those Britons who welcomed the war in 1914 as a chance to escape monotonous normality, "as swimmers into cleanness leaping." They got four years mired in Flanders' mud. In a 2016 referendum, Britons voted, 52 percent to 48 percent, for the exhilaration of emancipation from the European Union's gray bureaucratic conformities. They thereby leapt into a quagmire of negotiations with an EU determined to make separation sufficiently painful to discourage other nations from considering it.

On Tuesday, Parliament emphatically rejected the terms of separation that Prime Minister Theresa May negotiated with the EU. So, there is no majority, in Parliament or the country, for anything other than, perhaps, a second referendum, which might be impossible to organize before the March 29 deadline for leaving the EU — although the EU might extend the deadline, hoping for a British reversal. Another democracy recently rethought something momentous. On Sept. 29, 2008, with the U.S. financial system nearing collapse, the House of Representatives voted 228 to 205 against the George W. Bush administration's bailout plan. The Dow promptly plunged 7 percent (777 points off 11,143) and four days later the House reversed itself, 263 to 171.

Britain's 2016 referendum came hard on the heels of the 2015 surge of asylum-seekers into Europe. Much more than the margin of Brexit victory probably was provided by anxiety about Britain's and Europe's social cohesion. Since then, however, the immigration issue has cooled: Those identifying it as "the most important issue confronting Britain" plummeted from 48 percent in June 2016 to 17 percent in October 2018.

Of the four nations that comprise the U.K., Scotland and Northern Ireland voted Remain, Wales and England voted Leave. Many Remainers disparage many Leavers as "*English* nationalists." Brexiteers can cite a noble pedigree for their sentiments: Speaking in 1933 to the Royal Society of St. George, Winston Churchill said: "On this one night in the whole year we are allowed to use a forgotten, almost a forbidden word. We are allowed to mention the name of our own country, to speak of ourselves as 'Englishmen.'" The EU has dangerously promoted the blunderbuss principle that nationalism — the belief that one's nation has uniquely admirable aspects — is always dangerous. This principle stigmatizes normal and often defensible judgments.

In 2016, many Brexiteers had an aspiration with a glistening pedigree — Churchill's vision of British greatness ensured by looking not across the English Channel but across the Atlantic to ever-closer relations with what Churchill called "the Great Republic." This prospect lost luster when, 138 days after the referendum, that republic elected Donald Trump, whom many of Charles Darwin's countrymen think evolution passed by.

Diminishment and loss of control have been recurring British anxieties since the nation emerged depleted from World War II. In the Brexit debate, references to Suez have rekindled painful memories of the 1956 British-French-Israeli invasion intended to reverse Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal. The invasion was halted by a furious President Dwight D. Eisenhower using the leverage of Britain's financial weakness. Brexit is an attempt to revive national control and stature. It is subtracting from both.

Brexiteers believe that the fact that leaving the EU has proven to be so difficult a prison break validates Euroskepticism. They ask: Britain, which has been in the EU since 1993, was self-governing since the Romans departed in 410, so how calamitous can Brexit be? Very, respond Remainers, with increasing plausibility as the prospect of a "hard Brexit" — divorce with no new U.K.-EU legal and commercial relationships in place — becomes more probable.

Economic globalization, with the increasing importance of just-in-time inventory management of complex supply chains, raises the stakes for Britain, whose trade with the EU far exceeds its trade with either America or China. Steep tariffs and other controls could snap into place March 29, and The Wall Street Journal reports that officials at the Port of Dover "estimate that for every two minutes of delay trucks experience before embarking [on cross-Channel ferries], a 17-mile traffic backup will be created on the M20 highway heading to the port."

May's stolid pursuit of other people's goal — in the referendum she voted Remain — has evoked the criticism that "stamina is not a strategy." Actually, it might be: As the March 29 deadline for leaving the EU draws near, her agreement might seem marginally less unpalatable than, and the only alternative to, a hard Brexit, which could be "into chaos leaping."

OPINION

What newspapers are saying at home

The following editorial excerpts are selected from a cross section of newspapers throughout the United States. The editorials are provided by The Associated Press and other stateside syndicates.

King rightly put in check, should resign for constituents
The Des Moines (Iowa) Register

Congressman Steve King should resign. He has lost even the potential to effectively represent his Iowa constituents because of his abhorrent comments about white nationalism and white supremacy.

The move by House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy to strip King of his committee assignments leaves Iowa without a seat on the vital House Agriculture Committee, as well as judiciary. It also leaves King with far less opportunity to work for his constituents on critically important rural development issues.

Not that King has seemed particularly interested in working for his district in recent years. Instead of holding town-hall meetings with his constituents, King spent many congressional breaks globe-trotting to Europe and hobnobbing with hard-right, nationalist leaders. These meetings apparently served to reinforce his own warped views of cultural purity and immigration.

King has often made Iowa a laughingstock on the national stage with his offensive and absurd remarks about undocumented immigrants, comparing them to dogs or disparaging them as drug mules with calves the size of cantaloupes.

But it wasn't until a few weeks before the November election that top national Republicans and corporate donors started to abandon King. That was just after the mass shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh. It also was just after it had been revealed that King spent time on a trip funded by a Holocaust memorial organization to meet with a far-right Austrian group associated with neo-Nazis. Meanwhile, King had been under fire for tweeting his support for a Toronto mayoral candidate known for white nationalist views.

We don't make the argument that King should resign lightly, or based on partisan preferences. He was duly re-elected to a ninth term in November by voters who had every opportunity to recognize the Kiron Republican's caustic, racially charged ideology related to immigration. King opened the new year by seeming to recognize a need to spend more time in Iowa: He announced a town-hall meeting in each of his district's 39 counties.

But then, apparently in an effort to claim credit for President Donald Trump's border-wall plans, he gave The New York Times what should be a career-ending quote: "White nationalist, white supremacist, Western civilization — how did that language become offensive?" King said to the Times. "Why did I sit in classes teaching me about the merits of our history and our civilization?"

He has since tried to walk back the comments, claiming the quote was taken out of context and denouncing white nationalism and white supremacy. But to no avail: National Republicans and even staunch GOP supporters in Iowa — Sens. Chuck Grassley and Joni Ernst and Gov. Kim Reynolds — have expressed disgust at his original remarks.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said if King doesn't understand why "white supremacy" was offensive, he should "find another line of work." We agree. He may as well mail a cardboard cutout of himself to Washington for all he'll be able to accomplish if no one is willing to work with him.

We don't expect King to listen to us. But maybe he would listen to Grassley, Ernst, Reynolds and Republicans in his district. They should encourage him to step aside for the good of the Republican Party and, more importantly, for the good of Iowa.

Barr has promised fairness, should be confirmed as AG
The Washington Post

"In the current environment, the American people have to know that there are places in the government where the rule of law, not politics, holds sway," William Barr said Tuesday. "The Department of Justice must be such a place."

That was an important and reassuring message from President Donald Trump's nominee to be attorney general, who spent the day answering questions from the Senate Judiciary Committee. Barr, who served as attorney general once before, under President George H.W. Bush in the early 1990s, is a conservative Republican with views that not every American will embrace. But he came across as highly qualified and committed to the traditions, procedures and mores of the Justice Department.

Barr expressed confidence in special counsel Robert Mueller, pledged to ensure the Russia probe would not be undermined without good cause and said he would seek to release as much information as possible about Mueller's findings. He also promised to prioritize securing U.S. elections.

Much of the hearing centered on a memo Barr sent last June to Justice Department officials, in which he argued that Trump's firing of FBI Director James Comey should not be construed as obstruction of justice. Barr's expansive view of presidential deference is concerning, but in his testimony he limited the extent of that deference. He insisted that the president would be guilty of obstruction if he coerced someone to change testimony, suborned perjury or tampered with evidence. Barr said he would not stand by and watch the president fire a prosecutor in order to end a legitimate investigation. Presidential tampering in the administration of justice on behalf of personal interests would be "a breach of his constitutional duties" and "an abuse of power," he said.

At times, Barr seemed slightly out-of-time. He admitted ignorance of recent changes in electronic surveillance law. He defended his get-tough-on-crime past promoting stiff sentences in the early 1990s, and in the process appeared to claim that racial disparities in the justice system are less of a problem than many experts believe. But he said Congress was right to reassess harsh sentencing laws last year in the First Step Act, which he promised to faithfully apply.

Similarly, he sympathized with former Attorney General Jeff Sessions' permissive attitude toward overseeing local police departments. He nevertheless insisted that the Justice Department still has a role in policing "pattern or practice" problems among local authorities. He should keep that in mind as he reviews the justice system's record on racial equity.

Barr decried the confusing and unsettled state of marijuana policy in the United States, but he pledged no crackdown on those who have followed looser state laws and the Obama administration's policy of noninterference. He repeatedly insisted that more barriers are needed on the southern border, but that is hardly surprising from a Trump nominee.

"I can be truly independent," Barr declared Tuesday. The Senate should quickly confirm him and hold him to that pledge.

EPA pick at odds with Trump's 'drain the swamp' pledge
USA Today

"Drain the swamp!" was one of those memorable Donald Trump campaign promises that remains unfulfilled, much like "Mexico will pay for the wall!" and "Repeal and replace Obamacare!" with "something terrific."

Unlike the latter two promises, there's little debate about the need to establish strong ethical standards for government. That makes Trump's failure to keep his swamp-draining pledge — highlighted by the Senate confirmation hearing Wednesday for a former coal industry lobbyist nominated to run the Environmental Protection Agency — all the more disturbing.

Nominee Andrew Wheeler became acting EPA administrator after his predecessor and former boss, Scott Pruitt, resigned in July amid a cloud of self-serving ethics scandals. Wheeler, 54, doesn't carry Pruitt's ethical baggage, but he has devoted himself to a disciplined rollback of environmental safeguards.

Wheeler is one of 188 former lobbyists working in the administration, according to ProPublica, and a fox-guarding-the-henhouse example of someone regulating an industry that once paid him handsomely. Others include the acting secretary of the interior, David Bernhardt, previously an influential lobbyist for the fossil fuel industry, and EPA senior attorney Erik Baptist, who used to work as a lobbyist and lawyer for the American Petroleum Institute.

Trump replaced President Barack Obama's ethics rules with a set he said were tougher, but which in fact allow for the liberal granting of waivers so that the swamp once again can fill with water.

Among Wheeler's consulting duties, according to the Project on Government Oversight, was hosting a fundraiser for key Republican Sen. John Barrasso, now the chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

After more than a decade working for the Senate's premier denier of human-caused climate change, James Inhofe, of Oklahoma, Wheeler joined a consulting firm working against environmental restrictions on behalf of his top client, coal magnate Robert Murray.

"He's spent his career carrying out someone else's agenda," Joseph Goffman, executive director of Harvard Law School's environmental law program, says of Wheeler.

Since Wheeler joined EPA, first as deputy and then acting administrator, the agency has worked to roll back fuel efficiency standards on vehicles, ease greenhouse-gas restrictions on coal-burning power plants and, in December, rescind regulations that reduce coal-plant release of mercury and other poisons.

Given the Republican majority in the Senate and Trump's avid support, Wheeler's confirmation might be a foregone conclusion.

History will judge him for what he did — or didn't do — to head off catastrophic impacts from human-induced climate change. A daily drumbeat of reports confirms that warming oceans, melting icecaps and rising sea levels are more likely to drown coastal swamps than to drain them.

Ocasio-Cortez's goals only met by taxing the middle class
The Wall Street Journal

By now readers have heard that progressive luminary Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC for groupies) supports a 70 percent top marginal tax rate, which she says will help finance a "green new deal." Higher taxes on the rich is the stock socialist answer on how to pay for any project, though a reminder arrived this week that soaking the wealthy will barely register as a down payment.

The Tax Foundation on Monday did Ocasio-Cortez the favor of taking her proposal seriously and asked: How much money would the government reap from a 70 percent tax rate on income above $10 million? Authors Kyle Pomerleau and Huaqun Li looked at two scenarios — one if the rate applied only to ordinary income like wages and interest, and another if it also applied to income from capital gains.

The best-case scenario: A 70 percent rate would raise less than $300 billion in revenue over 10 years, which is less than half of the $700 billion that has been cited in press reports. Progressives aren't eager to put a price tag on the green new deal, which includes modest proposals like a universal jobs guarantee. But you can bet that ridding the economy of carbon will cost into the trillions of dollars.

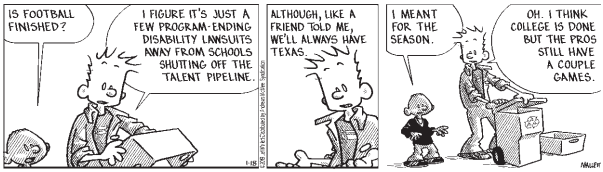
A 70 percent top rate would generate even less revenue if extended to capital gains. Investors only pay when they realize gains by selling assets, and they are especially sensitive to tax rates when deciding whether to sell. High rates can leave money locked into a current asset instead of flowing to the next good idea.

When the Tax Foundation authors considered the effect on behavior and incentives — why bother with that extra investment if most of the money will go to government? — they found that a 70 percent top rate on all income would lose the government $63.5 billion over 10 years.

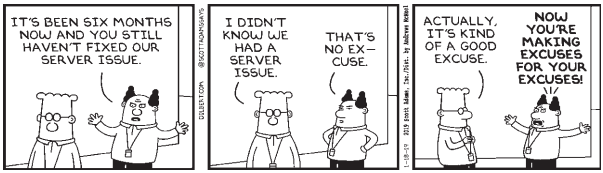
Ocasio-Cortez won't admit it, but she and her socialist friends will eventually have to go where the real money is: the middle class. That means higher tax rates on even modest wage earners; taxes on retirement savings like 401(k)s or college savings accounts.

Remember this the next time a Democrat or columnist who claims to be conservative says he'll finance a program by hitting the 1 percent of earners who already pay more than a third of America's income taxes. Sooner or later they're coming after you.

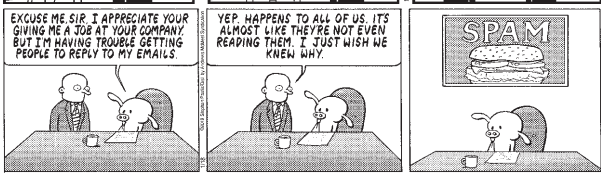
Frazz



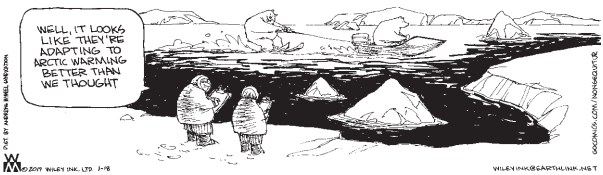
Dilbert



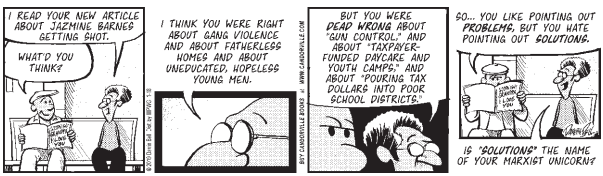
Pearls Before Swine



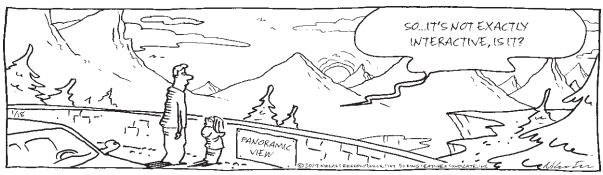
Non Sequitur



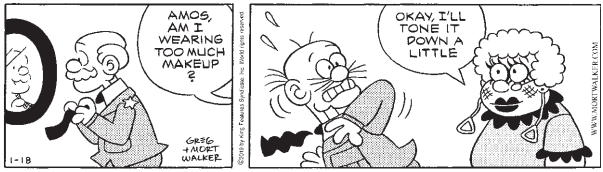
Candorville



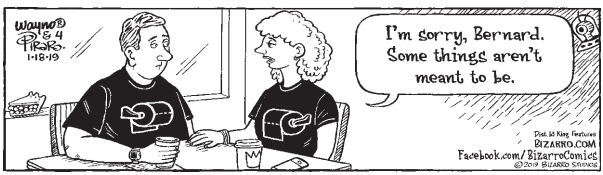
Carpe Diem



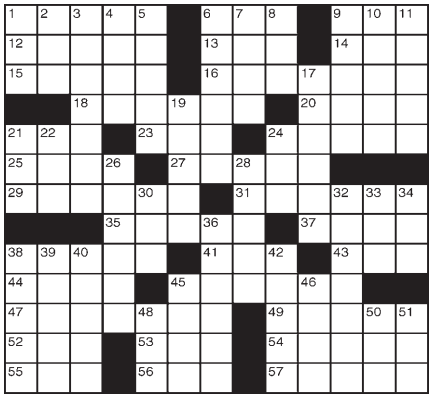
Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



ACROSS

1 Civil-rights org.
6 Crunchy sandwich
9 Eastern "way"
12 D-Day beach
13 Kanga's kid
14 Pirates' quaff
15 Stopwatch
16 "Charlotte's Web" author
18 Van Gogh painting
20 Black, in verse
21 Lass
23 Pouch
24 Raiment
25 "Rule, Britannia!" composer
27 Bush
29 Refines, as ore
31 Decrees
35 Void
37 Old U.S. gas brand
38 "West Side Story" song
41 Stashed
43 Science room
44 Shortly
45 Party snack
47 "The War of the Worlds" author
49 Did yard work
52 Enzyme suffix
53 Granola grain
54 Speak one's mind
55 USPS delivery
56 "— Clear Day"
57 Egg holders

DOWN

1 Word of denial
2 French pal
3 "Winnie-the-Pooh" author
4 "Moonstruck" actress
5 Seine city
6 Rifle part
7 High tennis shots
8 AAA job
9 Navajo or Hopi
10 Ones for the road?
11 Signs
17 Disney's "Love Bug"
19 Impudent
21 Ozone, for one
22 Branch
24 Flop
26 Broadway's Stritch
28 Pine product
30 TV schedule abbr.
32 "The Chronicles of Narnia" author
33 Airport screening org.
34 Weep
36 California peak
38 Taj —
39 Uneasy feeling
40 Crew member
42 Matt of Hollywood
45 Family
46 Francis, e.g.
48 Privy
50 Tolkien creature
51 — Moines

Answer to Previous Puzzle

M	E	A	L		H	U	R		E	A	R	P
E	L	S	A		A	R	E		A	C	E	R
A	B	I	T		N	I	A		R	A	N	I
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H	A	M	S		B	A	L	S	A	M	I	C
M	R	I			A	X	E			I	N	N
M	I	C	H	E	L	L	E		S	C	A	N
		R	A	P			G	N	U			
H	O	O	R	A	Y		R	O	B	B	E	D
A	B	B	A		A	V	A		M	A	R	A
L	I	E	S		N	I	N		I	B	I	D
L	E	S	S		K	I	T		T	E	N	S

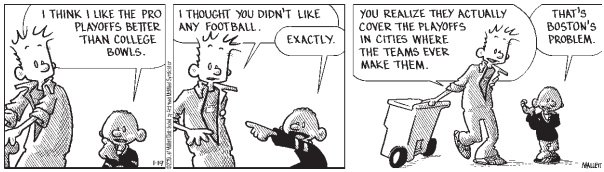
1-18 CRYPTOQUIP

VSBR IGOFRX G JBYMTUB ZSPJ'Z IBZI IP WBEPUB G EPCPXRB-ZRFMMFRX VPYOBY, ZUBCCFRX EPTRIZ.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHAT COULD YOU CALL THE WOOD OF SOME DINING FURNITURE BEING EATEN BY TERMITES? TABLE FOOD.

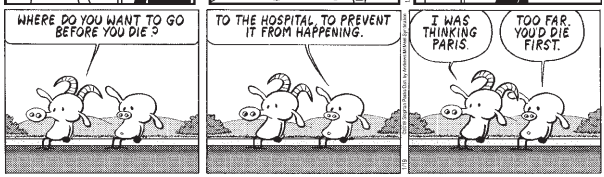
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: C equals L

Frazz

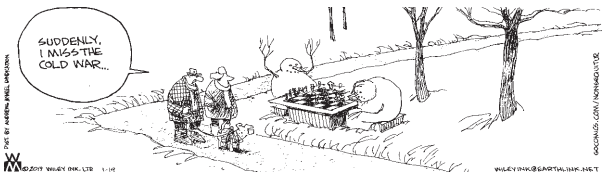


Dilbert

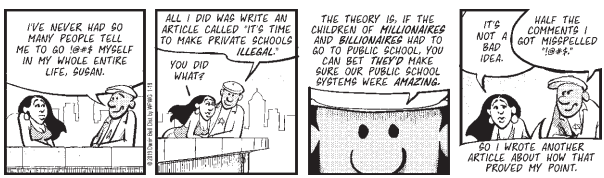
Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



Candorville

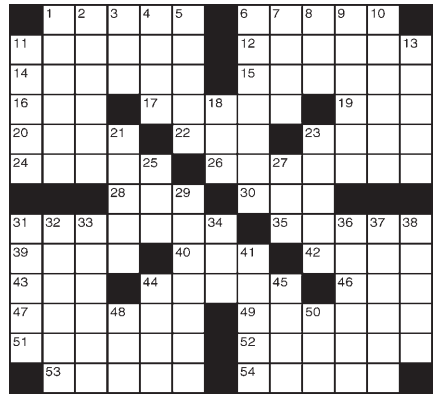


Carpe Diem

Beetle Bailey

Bizarro

Eugene Sheffer Crossword



ACROSS

1 Fashion
6 Cougars
11 Copier part
12 Sanford of "The Jeffersons"
14 Sweatshirt variety
15 "The Raven" maiden
16 Off-roader (Abbr.)
17 Burn with steam
19 Khan title
20 "Moonstruck" star
22 — -la-la
23 War god
24 "Praying" singer
26 TV actor Prinze
28 Business mag
30 Melancholy
31 Dagwood's lady
35 Chic again
39 Lariat
40 Neither mate
42 Actress de Matteo
43 — -de-France
44 Red Square figure
46 Last (Abbr.)
47 Sister of Moses
49 Restaurant fan
51 Sports venues
52 Not as small
53 Admin. aides
54 Plant firmly

DOWN

1 Mollify
2 Caches
3 Pay stub abbr.
4 Floral rings
5 Upright
6 Columns
7 Secondhand
8 Chess piece
9 On the train
10 Composer Prokofiev
11 Crude cabin
13 Rental contract
18 Canine cry
21 Bonn's river
23 Threw in
25 Moreover
27 Corn serving
29 Movie houses
31 Hat edges
32 Nabokov novel
33 Puccini works
34 Very long time
36 Plod
37 Counted (on)
38 Western flick
41 Sentry's weapon
44 Cannes milk
45 Linguist Chomsky
48 Check-cashing needs
50 Sphere

Answer to Previous Puzzle

N	A	A	C	P		B	L	T		T	A	O
O	M	A	H	A		R	O	O		R	U	M
T	I	M	E	R		E	B	W	H	I	T	E
		I	R	I	S	E	S		E	B	O	N
G	A	L		S	A	C		D	R	E	S	S
A	R	N	E		S	H	R	U	B			
S	M	E	L	T	S		E	D	I	C	T	S
			A	B	Y	S	S		E	S	S	O
M	A	R	I	A		H	I	D		L	A	B
A	N	O	N		C	A	N	A	P	E		
H	G	W	E	L	L	S		M	O	W	E	D
A	S	E		O	A	T		O	P	I	N	E
L	T	R		O	N	A		N	E	S	T	S

1-19 CRYPTOQUIP

L D D L H I E Q P V M ' J P N N R M E S L Q N E P V N E I A M Z X Z G M J J M E S M E Q X L Q D N E K . M Q ' Z Q G N Z M K I Z N A Q X I Z L J I R N M .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN TAKING A PERFUME SHOP'S TEST TO BECOME A COLOGNE-SNIFFING WORKER, SMELLING COUNTS.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: R equals K

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- People saying Free Dog (different breeds) for adoption.

Automotive 140

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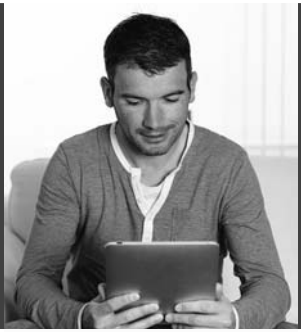

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Vol. 1—No. 241 1 Fr. 1 Fr. Sunday, March 25, 1945

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Pro football

NFL playoffs

Wild-card Playoffs
Saturday, Jan. 5
Indianapolis 21, Houston 7
Dallas 24, Seattle 22
Sunday, Jan. 6
L.A. Chargers 23, Baltimore 17
Philadelphia 16, Chicago 15
Divisional Playoffs
Saturday, Jan. 12
Kansas City 31, Indianapolis 13
L.A. Rams 30, Dallas 22
Sunday, Jan. 13
New England 41, L.A. Chargers 28
New Orleans 20, Philadelphia 14
Conference Championships
Sunday, Jan. 20
NFC
L.A. Rams at New Orleans
AFC
New England at Kansas City
Pro Bowl
Sunday, Jan. 27
At Orlando, Fla.
AFC vs. NFC
Super Bowl
Sunday, Feb. 3
At Atlanta
AFC champion vs. NFC champion

NFL injury report

Sunday

LOS ANGELES RAMS at NEW ORLEANS SAINTS — RAMS: No report. **SAINTS:** DNP: WR Keith Kirkwood (calf), TE Benjamin Watson (illness). LIMITED: T Andrus Peat (hand), T Ryan Ramczyk (shoulder), C Max Unger (knee).

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS at KANSAS CITY CHIEFS — PATRIOTS: FULL: DL Deatrich Wise Jr. (ankle). **CHIEFS:** DNP: LB Dorian O'Daniel (ankle). LIMITED: G Laurent Duvernay-Tardif (ankle), RB Spencer Ware (hamstring). FULL: S Eric Berry (heel), CB Kendall Fuller (thumb/shoulder), WR Tyreek Hill (thigh/heel), LB Anthony Hitchens (knee), S Jordan Lucas (shoulder), WR Sammy Watkins (foot), G Andrew Wylie (bicep).

Boxing

Fight schedule

Jan. 18

At Turning Stone Resort & Casino, Verona, N.Y., Bryant Jennings vs. Oscar Rivas, 12, for Jennings' IBF International-WBO-NABO heavyweights titles; Jason Sosa vs. Moises Delgadillo, 10, super featherweights; Carlos Adames vs. JUan Ruiz, 10, super welterweights. Shakur Stevenson vs. Jessie Cris Rosales, 10, featherweights.

At Madison Square Garden Theater, New York, Demetrius Andrade vs. Artur Akavov, 12, for Andrade's WBO middleweight title; Jorge Linares vs. Pablo Cesar Cano, 12, for Linares' WBC International Silver super lightweight title; Chris Algieri vs. Daniel Gonzalez, 10, welterweights.

Jan. 19

At MGM Grand, Las Vegas, Manny Pacquiao vs. Adrien Broner, 12, for Pacquiao's WBA welterweight title; Badou Jack vs. Marcus Browne, 12, for the WBA interim light heavyweight title; Rau'shee Warren vs. Nordine Oubaali, 12, for the vacant WBC bantamweight title; Jhack Tepora vs. Hugo Ruiz, 12, for Tepora's interim WBA featherweight title.

Jan. 26

At Barclays Center, New York, Keith Thurman vs. Josesito Lopez, 12, for Thurman's WBA Super World welterweight title; Tugstsogt Nyambayar vs. Claudio Marrero, 12, for the vacant IBO featherweight title; Adam Kownacki vs. Gerald Washington, 10, heavyweights.

At Toyota Center, Houston, Jaime Munguia vs. Takeshi Inoue, 12, for Munguia's WBO junior middleweight title; Jesus Rojas vs. Xu Can, 12, for Rojas' WBA featherweight title; Joshua Franco vs. Lucas Fernandez, 10, for the vacant NABF bantamweight title; Alberto Melian vs. Edgar Ortega, 10, super bantamweights; Vergil Ortiz Jr. vs. Jesus Barrayan, 10, super lightweights.

Feb. 1

At Main Street Armory, Rochester, N.Y., Ronald Ellis vs. DeAndre Ware, 10, for the vacant NABA/USBO/WBC Continental Americas super middleweight titles.

Feb. 2

At Ford Center, Frisco, Texas, Eleider Alvarez vs. Sergey Kovalev, 12, for Alvarez's WBO light heavyweight title; Richard Commey vs. Isa Chaniev, 12, for vacant IBF lightweight title; Oscar Valdez vs. Carmine Tommasone, 12, for Valdez's WBO featherweight title; Teofimo Lopez vs. Diego Magdaleno, 10, lightweights; Patrick Day vs. Ismail Iliev, 10, super welterweigts; Bakhram Murtazaliev vs. Elvin Ayala, 10, super welterweights.

College football

All-Star games

East-West Shrine Classic
Saturday, Jan. 19
At St. Petersburg, Fla.
East vs. West
NFLPA Collegiate Bowl
Saturday, Jan. 19
At Pasadena, Calif.
American vs. National
Senior Bowl
Saturday, Jan. 26
At Mobile, Ala.
North vs. South

Pro basketball

NBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Toronto	33	13	.717	—
Philadelphia	29	16	.644	3½
Boston	26	18	.591	6
Brooklyn	23	23	.500	10
New York	10	33	.233	21½

Southeast Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Miami	21	21	.500	—
Charlotte	20	23	.465	1½
Orlando	19	25	.432	3
Washington	18	26	.409	4
Atlanta	14	30	.318	8

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	32	12	.727	—
Indiana	29	14	.674	2½
Detroit	19	24	.442	12½
Chicago	10	34	.227	22
Cleveland	9	36	.200	23½

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	25	19	.568	—
San Antonio	26	20	.565	—
New Orleans	21	24	.467	4½
Dallas	20	24	.455	5
Memphis	19	25	.432	6

Northwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Denver	29	14	.674	—
Oklahoma City	26	17	.605	3
Portland	27	19	.587	3½
Utah	25	21	.543	5½
Minnesota	21	23	.477	8½

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Golden State	31	14	.689	—
L.A. Clippers	24	20	.545	6½
L.A. Lakers	24	21	.533	7
Sacramento	23	21	.523	7½
Phoenix	11	34	.244	20

Tuesday's games
Indiana 131, Phoenix 97
Philadelphia 149, Minnesota 107
Atlanta 142, Oklahoma City 126
Milwaukee 124, Miami 86
Golden State 142, Denver 111
L.A. Lakers 107, Chicago 100
Wednesday's games
Detroit 120, Orlando 115, OT
Boston 117, Toronto 108
Brooklyn 145, Houston 142, OT
Milwaukee 111, Memphis 101
San Antonio 105, Dallas 101
Portland 129, Cleveland 112
Golden State 147, New Orleans 140
Utah 129, L.A. Clippers 109
Thursday's games
New York vs. Washington at London
Philadelphia at Indiana
Sacramento at Charlotte
Phoenix at Toronto
Chicago at Denver
L.A. Lakers at Oklahoma City
Friday's games
Brooklyn at Orlando
Memphis at Boston
Miami at Detroit
San Antonio at Minnesota
Cleveland at Utah
Golden State at L.A. Clippers
New Orleans at Portland
Saturday's games
Oklahoma City at Philadelphia
Phoenix at Charlotte
Dallas at Indiana
Milwaukee at Orlando
Sacramento at Detroit
Boston at Atlanta
Memphis at Toronto
Miami at Chicago
L.A. Lakers at Houston
Cleveland at Denver
Sunday's games
Charlotte at Indiana
Phoenix at Minnesota
L.A. Clippers at San Antonio

Pro baseball

MLB calendar

Jan. 22 — BBWAA Hall of Fame voting announced.

Jan. 28-Feb. 15 — Salary arbitration hearings, St. Petersburg, Fla.

Feb. 6-8 — Owners' meetings, Orlando, Fla.

Feb. 10 — Voluntary reporting date for Oakland pitchers, catchers and injured players.

Feb. 11 — Voluntary reporting date for Seattle pitchers, catchers and injured players.

Feb. 13 — Voluntary reporting date for other teams' pitchers, catchers and injured players.

Feb. 15 — Voluntary reporting date for other players on Oakland and Seattle.

Feb. 18 — Voluntary reporting date for other teams' other players.

Feb. 23 — Mandatory reporting date.

March 20-21 — Opening series, Seattle vs. Oakland at Tokyo.

March 28 — Opening day for other teams, active rosters reduced to 25 players.

April 13-14 — St. Louis vs. Cincinnati at Monterrey, Mexico.

College basketball

Wednesday's men's scores

EAST
Army 91, Colgate 81
Dominican (NY) 72, Concordia (N.Y.) 60
George Mason 68, UMass 63
George Washington 59, La Salle 56
Hartford 77, Maine 76
Holy Family 90, Chestnut Hill 77
Iowa 89, Penn St. 82
Lehigh 83, American U. 76
Lipscomb 70, NJIT 52
Loyola (Md.) 81, Boston U. 73, OT
Mass.-Lowell 84, Albany (NY) 72
Navy 85, Lafayette 77
Rhode Island 75, St. Bonaventure 63
St. John's 81, Creighton 66
Staten Island 74, Baruch 49
Susquehanna 87, Scranton 76
Thiel 74, Geneva 66
UMBC 68, Binghamton 49
Vermont 73, New Hampshire 59
Wilmington (Del.) 89, Sciences (Pa.) 87, OT
SOUTH
Barton 91, Mount Olive 79
Berea 67, Brevard 53
Campbell 70, UNC Asheville 53
Clayton St. 82, Georgia College 67
Clemson 72, Georgia Tech 60
Duquesne 74, Richmond 68
E. Mennonite 68, Va. Wesleyan 66
Emory & Henry 76, Roanoke 56
High Point 71, SC-Upstate 54
Liberty 62, Kennesaw St. 41
Longwood 75, Winthrop 61
Louisville 80, Boston College 70
McNeese St. 86, Nicholls 75
New Orleans 68, Stephen F. Austin 61
North Alabama 91, Jacksonville 88
North Florida 87, Stetson 77
Presbyterian 85, Hampton 70
SE Louisiana 76, Lamar 69
South Carolina 74, Vanderbilt 71
Spalding 68, Fontbonne 62
Temple 85, East Carolina 74
Thomas More 105, Campbellsville 73
Transylvania 76, Franklin 72
UNC Pembroke 93, Augusta 88
VCU 76, Dayton 71
MIDWEST
Alabama 70, Missouri 60
Alma 87, Hope 74
Augsburg 91, Hamline 68
Bethany Lutheran 99, North Central (Minn.) 72
Butler 87, DePaul 69
Calvin 83, Kalamazoo 71
Concordia (Moor.) 67, St. Mary's (Minn.) 60
Crown (Minn.) 88, Martin Luther 79
Culver-Stockton 93, William Penn 92, OT
Drake 69, Bradley 52
Evansville 70, Missouri St. 64
Graceland (Iowa) 91, MidAm Nazarene 85
Gustavus 81, Macalester 75
Hastings 83, Doane 60
Illinois 95, Minnesota 68
Mount Mercy 88, Clarke 80
N. Iowa 69, Indiana St. 64
Northwestern (Minn.) 94, Minn.-Morris 73
Olivet 75, Adrian 54
Peru St. 73, Grand View 70
Ripon 71, Beloit 63
S. Dakota St. 78, North Dakota 74
St. Norbert 63, Lake Forest 62
St. Olaf 59, Carleton 56
St. Scholastica 90, Northland 67
St. Thomas (Minn.) 86, Bethel (Minn.) 75
Trine 79, Albion 71
Wichita St. 75, UCF 67
Wis.-La Crosse 61, Wis.-Stevens Pt. 57
Wis.-Oshkosh 82, Wis.-Whitewater 75
Wis.-Platteville 81, Wis.-Eau Claire 62
Wis.-River Falls 71, Wis.-Stout 69
SOUTHWEST
Abilene Christian 75, Houston Baptist 68
Auburn 85, Texas A&M 66
Cent. Arkansas 77, Incarnate Word 60
Houston 69, SMU 58
Iowa St. 68, Texas Tech 64
Kansas St. 74, Oklahoma 61
Sam Houston St. 72, Texas A&M-CC 50
Tulsa 89, UConn 83
FAR WEST
Air Force 106, UNLV 88
Denver 80, N. Dakota St. 65
Long Beach St. 80, UC Irvine 70
Utah St. 81, San Jose St. 63

AP Men's Top 25 schedule

Friday's games
No. 16 Buffalo vs. Eastern Michigan
No. 19 Maryland at Ohio State
No. 22 Villanova vs. Xavier at the Wells Fargo Center
Saturday's games
No. 1 Duke vs. No. 4 Virginia
No. 2 Michigan at Wisconsin
No. 3 Tennessee vs. Alabama
No. 5 Gonzaga at Portland
No. 7 Kansas at West Virginia
No. 8 Texas Tech at Baylor
No. 9 Virginia Tech vs. Wake Forest
No. 10 Nevada vs. Air Force
No. 12 Kentucky at No. 14 Auburn
No. 13 North Carolina at Miami
No. 17 N.C. State at Notre Dame
No. 18 Mississippi vs. Arkansas
No. 20 Oklahoma at Texas
No. 21 Houston at South Florida
No. 24 Mississippi State at Vanderbilt
No. 25 Indiana at Purdue
Sunday's games
No. 11 Florida State at Boston College
No. 15 Marquette vs. Providence
No. 23 Iowa vs. Illinois

Wednesday's women's scores

EAST
Albany (NY) 63, Mass.-Lowell 56
American U. 82, Loyola (Md.) 38
Army 65, Lafayette 50
Binghamton 67, UMBC 45
Bucknell 71, Lehigh 53
Buffalo 77, Ball St. 65
Colgate 81, Boston U. 72
Dayton 62, St. Bonaventure 49
Dominican (NY) 80, Concordia (NY) 49
Duquesne 81, Saint Joseph's 73
George Mason 70, UMass 52
George Washington 67, La Salle 59
Hartford 49, Maine 46
Holy Family 77, Chestnut Hill 69
Navy 54, Holy Cross 47
Rider 66, Iona 58
Rutgers 65, Purdue 63
Sciences (Pa.) 83, Wilmington (Del.) 39
Staten Island 78, Baruch 49
Thiel 79, Geneva 56
VCU 47, Fordham 44
Vermont 69, New Hampshire 60
Villanova 58, Penn 50
West Virginia 73, Iowa St. 64
SOUTH
Augusta 64, UNC Pembroke 59
Barton 88, Mount Olive 71
Clayton St. 70, Georgia College 56
Davidson 78, Richmond 55
E. Mennonite 63, Shenandoah 47
ETSU 75, Furman 70
McNeese St. 69, Nicholls 68
Milligan 90, Columbia International 44
Notre Dame 80, Virginia Tech 51
Spalding 72, Fontbonne 62
Tennessee Tech 76, Tennessee St. 65
UCF 60, Tulsa 44
UConn 75, Tulane 33
MIDWEST
Adrian 62, Olivet 40
Augsburg 66, Hamline 46
Baylor 94, Kansas 68
Bethany Lutheran 65, North Central (Minn.) 56
Carthage 71, Carroll (Wis.) 60
Cincinnati 72, Temple 52
Clarke 64, Mount Mercy 56
Concordia (Wis.) 97, Illinois Tech 27
Crown (Minn.) 69, Martin Luther 51
Doane 68, Hastings 62
E. Michigan 72, Akron 60
Edgewood 79, Marian (Wis.) 62
Grand View 71, Peru St. 67
Gustavus 74, Macalester 65
Kansas St. 87, Texas 69
Miami (Ohio) 70, Cent. Michigan 67
Mid-Am Nazarene 84, Graceland (Iowa) 69
Minn.-Morris 68, Northwestern (Minn.) 52
N. Illinois 66, Bowling Green 52
Northwestern 75, Indiana 69
Ohio 83, Kent St. 81
Rhode Island 68, Saint Louis 56
Ripon 65, Beloit 59
St. Benedict 64, Saint Catherine 49
St. Mary's (Minn.) 68, Concordia (Moor.) 66
St. Norbert 70, Lake Forest 56
St. Olaf 73, Carleton 54
St. Scholastica 69, Northland 54
St. Thomas (Minn.) 66, Bethel (Minn.) 62
Toledo 80, W. Michigan 57
W. Illinois 78, Omaha 70
William Penn 55, Culver-Stockton 47
Wis. Lutheran 71, Lakeland 45
Wis.-Eau Claire 76, Wis.-Platteville 64
Wis.-LaCrosse 55, Wis.-Stevens Pt. 46
Wis.-Stout 76, Wis.-River Falls 64
SOUTHWEST
Abilene Christian 72, Houston Baptist 62
Cent. Arkansas 74, Incarnate Word 43
Lamar 94, SE Louisiana 54
Stephen F. Austin 97, New Orleans 38
TCU 78, Texas Tech 70
Texas A&M-CC 76, Sam Houston St. 61
FAR WEST
Boise St. 75, Nevada 74
New Mexico 70, San Diego St. 62
UNLV 66, Air Force 56
Utah St. 82, San Jose St. 49

AP Women's Top 25 schedule

Friday's games
No. 5 Oregon vs. No. 19 Arizona State
No. 6 Stanford vs. Washington
No. 10 Oregon State vs. Arizona
No. 14 Marquette vs. Seton Hall
No. 24 DePaul vs. St. John's
Saturday's games
No. 11 Texas vs. TCU
No. 13 Gonzaga at San Diego
No. 18 Iowa State vs. Oklahoma
Sunday's games
No. 1 Notre Dame vs. Boston College
No. 2 Baylor vs. West Virginia
No. 2 UConn at Temple
No. 4 Louisville at Wake Forest
No. 5 Oregon vs. Arizona
No. 6 Stanford vs. Washington State
No. 8 N.C. State vs. Virginia Tech
No. 9 Maryland vs. Penn State
No. 10 Oregon State vs. No. 19 Arizona State
No. 12 Syracuse at Georgia Tech
No. 14 Marquette vs. St. John's
No. 17 Michigan State at No. 20 Rutgers
No. 22 Iowa at Illinois
No. 23 Minnesota at Nebraska
No. 24 DePaul vs. Seton Hall
No. 25 Indiana at Purdue

AP sportlight

Jan. 18

1938 — Grover Cleveland Alexander is elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame. His 90 shutouts is second on the all-time list to Walter Johnson and his 16 shutouts in 1916 is still the major league record.

1958 — Canadian born Willie O'Ree becomes the NHL's first black player for the Boston Bruins.

1972 — The Lakers' Jerry West, hits a last second, 20-foot jumper to lead the West team to a 112-110 NBA All-Star victory over the East, as he garners the MVP award.

1996 — Baseball owners break with more than a century of tradition by unanimously approving interleague play in 1997.

College hockey

Wednesday's scores

EAST
RPI 5, UConn 2
Maine 7, Boston College 2

Deals

Wednesday's transactions

BASEBALL

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE — Suspended Kansas City LHP Eric Skoglund 80 games for violating Major League Baseball's Joint Drug Prevention and Treatment Program.

American League

NEW YORK YANKEES — Traded OF Tim Locastro to Arizona for LHP Ronald Roman and cash.

TEXAS RANGERS — Announced the retirement of RHP Shawn Tolleson.

National League

CHICAGO CUBS — Claimed LHP Ian Clarkin off waivers from the White Sox.

LOS ANGELES DODGERS — Named Travis Barbary manager, Scott Coolbaugh hitting coach and Jeremy Rodriguez coach of Oklahoma City (PCL); Adam Melhuse hitting coach of Tulsa (TL); Mark Kertenian manager of Rancho Cucamonga (Cal); Luis Mexa pitching coach and Justin Viele hitting coach of Great Lakes (MWL); Austin Chubb manager and Cordell Hipolito coach of Ogden (Pioneer); and Jair Fernandez manager and Stephanos Stroop pitching coach of the AZL Dodgers.

NEW YORK METS — Signed INF Jed Lowrie to a two-year contract.

PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES — Named Bobby Dickerson infield coach and Paco Figueroa first base coach.

BASKETBALL

National Basketball Association

ATLANTA HAWKS — Assigned G Tyler Dorsey to Erie (NBAGL). Transferred F Alex Poythress to Erie.

FOOTBALL

National Football League

BUFFALO BILLS — Re-signed LB Lorenzo Alexander to a one-year contract.

DENVER BRONCOS — Named Rich Scangarello offensive coordinator.

DETROIT LIONS — Named Darrell Bevell offensive coordinator.

GREEN BAY PACKERS — Named Nathaniel Hackett offensive coordinator.

JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS — Named John DeFilippo offensive coordinator, Terry Robiskie running backs coach, Tim Walton cornerbacks coach and George Warhop offensive line coach. Promoted assistant defensive line coach Jason Rebrovich to defensive line coach and assistant secondary coach Joe Danna to safeties coach.

NEW YORK JETS — Named Gregg Williams defensive coordinator.

TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS — Named Byron Leftwich offensive coordinator, Tim Atkins, defensive quality control, Chris Boniol, specialists, Mike Caldwell, inside linebackers, Mike Chiurco, assistant to the head coach, Clyde Christensen, quarterbacks, Rick Christophel, tight ends, Larry Foote, outside linebackers, Kevin Garver, wide receivers, Joe Gilbert, offensive line, Cody Grimm, defensive/Special Teams Assistant, Amos Jones, assistant special teams, Todd McNair, running backs, Antwaan Randle El, offensive assistant, Nick Rapone, safeties, Kacy Rodgers, defensive line, Kevin Ross, cornerbacks and John Van Dam, offensive quality control.

HOCKEY

National Hockey League

NHL — Suspended Montreal Canadiens F Paul Byron for three games, without pay, for charging Florida Panthers D MacKenzie Weegar during a game on Tuesday.

ANAHEIM DUCKS — Recalled RW Troy Terry, LW Max Jones and D Andrej Sustr from San Diego (AHL). Reassigned RW Kiefer Sherwood and D Jake Dotchin to San Diego. Acquired C Justin Kloos from the Minnesota Wild for LW Pontus Aberg.

EDMONTON OILERS — Assigned G Dylan Wells from Bakersfield (AHL) to Wichita (ECHL).

NEW YORK RANGERS — Assigned G Brandon Halverson from Hartford (AHL) to Maine (ECHL).

TAMPA BAY LIGHTNING — Assigned D Oleg Sosunov from Syracuse (AHL) to Orlando (ECHL). Recalled D Matthew Spencer from Orlando to Syracuse.

TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS — Assigned G Eamon McAdam and D Timothy Liljegren from Toronto (AHL) to Newfoundland (ECHL).

SOCCER

Major League Soccer

ATLANTA UNITED — Signed F Josef Martinez to a five-year contract extension.

LOS ANGELES FC — Re-signed Ds Danilo Silva and Dejan Jakovic.

LA GALAXY — Re-signed M Servando Carrasco. Named Juan Jos? Romero goalkeeper coach.

NEW ENGLAND REVOLUTION — Traded the rights to D Claude Dielna to Portland for general allocation money.

COLLEGE

COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF — Added former Texas A&M coach R.C. Slocum, Arkansas State athletic director Terry Mohajir and retired Gen. Ray Odierno to the selection committee.

ALABAMA — Graduate QB Jalen Hurts will transfer to Oklahoma.

ARKANSAS — Announced graduate WR La'Michael Pettway will transfer.

UCONN — Named Lou Spanos defensive coordinator.

AUTO RACING

HEAR THEM ROAR

Air Force veteran assembles first team of all female drivers

By Jenna Fryer
Associated Press

Photos by Mark Long

Katherine Legge of England waits to drive during a test session at Daytona International Speedway on Jan. Legge is part of an all-female-driver team making its debut in the Rolex 24 at Daytona this month.

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Every racing series in the world is full of wealthy enthusiasts with ideas that sound too good to be true. Expensive promises to fund life-changing opportunities are usually broken before cars even make it to the track.

Jackie Heinricher has defied those odds and turned an outlandish idea into one of the most highly anticipated debuts in racing.

She has put together an all-female team of drivers that will debut later this month at the Rolex 24 at Daytona, one of the most prestigious endurance races in the world. Her vision became a reality because she found a commercial sponsor with Caterpillar, landed a partner in Meyer Shank Racing and signed up top racers — all of whom wanted to be part of the unique project.

"I am scared, a little bit," British driver Katherine Legge said. "I am scared that it will be gimmicky and we won't be taken seriously. That's why we have the drivers we have, that's why we are going with a professional team, that's why we made sure we had everything to do it right.

"We are going to be under a spotlight whether we like it or not, and the last thing we want to do is go out there and be like the 'girl team.' That is detrimental to what we are trying to achieve."

Heinricher is an Air Force veteran, scientist and founder of her own biotech company, Booshoot Technology, based in Sun Valley, Idaho. She is also the female equivalent of a "gentleman racer" in the world of exotic cars, which means she pays her own way for the right to race against professionals on the top circuits in the world. Heinricher found that racing was the same as the STEM field in that women are an anomaly. There just weren't many female role models to follow.

Heinricher is a racing fan who often rooted for the female drivers, and just as the drivers themselves grew frustrated with their inability to advance in American racing, Heinricher grew tired of seeing the women leave the U.S. for opportunities in Europe.

"I started having this vision to bring these top women professionals together to race a season together," Heinricher said.

Then she had to sell it, to drivers and sponsors. Sports car racing is one of the few series that requires multiple driver lineups, and Heinricher's attempt to field an all-female team in a world-renowned series is unprecedented.

"I've watched many of these things fall flat on their faces, go out in the press without any substance," she said. "I started talking with drivers and I was always very transparent that I had to accomplish the money side. There was skepticism. They were like, 'Who is this crazy gentleman driver woman? What does she want from us?'"

> **'Give girls positive role models that aren't just stripping off and posing on the front of a car.'**
>
> **Katherine Legge**
> Member of all-female driving team in IMSA

Legge has been part of enough crummy deals to be wary of hair-brained ideas. Legge was part of Lotus' noncompetitive return to IndyCar, she was a centerpiece in the lineup for the weird DeltaWing sports car project and the driver for an Indianapolis 500 team that was going to be composed entirely of women. It never happened.

Legge knew of Heinricher's idea for two years and agreed to be part of it because, for once, it looked as if the pieces were in place for something to actually come together.

Legge was already part of Meyer Shank Racing, and her Acura team won twice last season and finished second overall in IMSA's GTD class. When Heinricher landed Caterpillar as sponsor for her vision, she was able to take it to Legge and the Meyer Shank team.

Then came signing the rest of the lineup. The roster for the twice-round-the-clock endurance race at Daytona is Legge, the full-time driver of the car, along with:

■ **Simona de Silvestro.** A former IndyCar driver who has been a Formula One test driver, the "Swiss Missile" most recently competed in the Virgin Australia Supercars Championship.

■ **Bia Figueiredo.** She raced as Ana Beatriz in IndyCar because it was easier to pronounce, and the Brazilian is the only woman to have won races at that series' second level.

■ **Christina Nielsen.** A two-time IMSA class champion, the Danish driver was brought in to complete the Rolex lineup because Heinricher injured her back in a crash testing the car in December.

The lineup has more combined experience and success than Danica Patrick, the most well-known female racer of this generation. And the group views it as a chance to further opportunities for women.

Team owner Jackie Heinricher, left, chats with driver Katherine Legge during a test session at Daytona. Heinricher, an Air Force veteran, lined up a corporate sponsor and partner to help make her vision of an all-female driving team a reality.

"Being the only girl you are given a hall pass. It's, 'Katherine is OK or Danica is OK,' and you are taken as an independent person in a sea of women and they still make fun of woman drivers, but you are different somehow," Legge explained. "And I am like, 'No, that is not true. We can if we are given the opportunity to prove that we can do it.'

"There aren't that many girls coming up through the ranks. Give girls positive role models that aren't just stripping off and posing on the front of a car. You go to a race track and you see 'Grid Girls' and very rarely do you see engineers, people working behind the scenes, working on race cars. If you are a parent, and you have a kid who wants to be in racing, I wanted to show that that's not the only way you can do it."

The team is slated to run the entire IMSA schedule, and Figueiredo posted the fastest lap in class during a qualifying session earlier this month. That proved the car is no joke, and the lineup goes into the Jan. 26-27 season-opening race determined to prove they can compete with their male counterparts.

"I think we can be a contender for the race win," Nielsen said. "We are all on the same page and have been for years. Kat and I frequently quote the saying 'Once you are behind the wheel, the car can't tell if it is a man or woman driving.'"

Heinricher still plans to be part of the lineup at some point this season, but for now revels in her creation. She knows Legge worries about an effort that might set women back in racing. She is confident this venture will be different.

"I never sold this partnership to go out and be on the podium every day. There are very few role models for young girls in STEM," she said. "Part of this partnership is not only does this do that, but it steps into cars and leadership and the STEM side. If I put together Humpty Dumpty with six broken pieces, I am sure that would be a gimmick and we'd be laughed at all day long. I just wanted to work with professional people."

Heinricher has a real race team, but Legge believes judgment will still be based on the bottom line.

"One race is not going to be gimmicky or not gimmicky, but over the season if we finish last every race, absolutely that would be gimmicky," Legge said. "But that's not going to happen with the people we've put in place."

NHL

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Tampa Bay	47	36	9	2	74	191	133
Toronto	45	28	15	2	58	161	128
Boston	47	26	16	5	57	136	123
Montreal	48	26	17	5	57	146	142
Buffalo	47	24	17	6	54	137	140
Detroit	48	18	23	7	43	136	161
Florida	45	17	20	8	42	139	165
Ottawa	47	18	24	5	41	148	180
Metropolitan Division							
Columbus	46	28	15	3	59	152	140
Washington	46	27	14	5	59	157	139
N.Y. Islanders	45	26	15	4	56	136	118
Pittsburgh	46	25	15	6	56	163	137
Carolina	46	22	19	5	49	125	136
N.Y. Rangers	46	19	20	7	45	132	159
New Jersey	46	18	21	7	43	137	157
Philadelphia	47	18	23	6	42	134	167

Western Conference

Central Division	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Winnipeg	46	30	14	2	62	160	129
Nashville	48	28	16	4	60	152	124
Dallas	47	23	20	4	50	121	124
Colorado	47	21	18	8	50	159	152
Minnesota	46	23	20	3	49	131	134
St. Louis	45	20	20	5	45	126	137
Chicago	48	16	23	9	41	142	179
Pacific Division							
Calgary	48	30	13	5	65	176	137
San Jose	49	28	14	7	63	175	149
Vegas	49	28	17	4	60	147	131
Edmonton	47	23	21	3	49	136	148
Vancouver	48	21	21	6	48	138	151
Anaheim	47	19	19	9	47	113	143
Arizona	46	21	22	3	45	122	133
Los Angeles	47	18	25	4	40	107	139

Note: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.

Tuesday's games

Columbus 4, New Jersey 1
N.Y. Islanders 2, St. Louis 1, OT
N.Y. Rangers 6, Carolina 2
Montreal 5, Florida 1
Detroit 3, Anaheim 1
Nashville 7, Washington 2
Minnesota 3, Los Angeles 2, SO
Winnipeg 4, Vegas 1
Tampa Bay 2, Dallas 0
San Jose 5, Pittsburgh 2

Wednesday's games

Ottawa 5, Colorado 2
Philadelphia 4, Boston 3
Buffalo 4, Calgary 3, OT
Edmonton 3, Vancouver 2, SO
Arizona 6, San Jose 3

Thursday's games

St. Louis at Boston
New Jersey vs. N.Y. Islanders at Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum
Chicago at N.Y. Rangers
Toronto at Tampa Bay
Anaheim at Minnesota
Winnipeg at Nashville
Los Angeles at Dallas

Friday's games

Montreal at Columbus
Toronto at Florida
Ottawa at Carolina
N.Y. Islanders at Washington
Detroit at Calgary
Pittsburgh at Arizona
Buffalo at Vancouver

Saturday's games

Anaheim at New Jersey
Los Angeles at Colorado
Ottawa at St. Louis
N.Y. Rangers at Boston
Philadelphia at Montreal
San Jose at Tampa Bay
Winnipeg at Dallas
Florida at Nashville
Columbus at Minnesota
Pittsburgh at Vegas
Calgary at Edmonton

Sunday's games

Washington at Chicago
Anaheim at N.Y. Islanders
Detroit at Vancouver
Arizona at Toronto
Carolina at Edmonton

Leaders

Goal scoring

Name, Team	GP	G
Alex Ovechkin, Washington	46	33
Jeff Skinner, Buffalo	47	30
Connor McDavid, Edmonton	46	29
Brayden Point, Tampa Bay	47	29
John Tavares, Toronto	45	29
Johnny Gaudreau, Calgary	48	28
Gabriel Landeskog, Colorado	47	28
Cam Atkinson, Columbus	45	27
Patrick Kane, Chicago	47	27
Nathan MacKinnon, Colorado	47	27
David Pastrnak, Boston	47	27
Joe Pavelski, San Jose	49	26
Patrik Laine, Winnipeg	46	25
Sean Monahan, Calgary	48	25
Mark Scheifele, Winnipeg	46	25
Leon Draisaitl, Edmonton	47	24
Steven Stamkos, Tampa Bay	47	24

Plus/Minus

Name, Team	GP	+/-
Mark Giordano, Calgary	46	33
T.J. Brodie, Calgary	48	30
Brian Dumoulin, Pittsburgh	46	26
Elias Lindholm, Calgary	48	26
Michal Kempny, Washington	43	25
Colton Sissons, Nashville	41	25
Morgan Rielly, Toronto	45	24
Ron Hainsey, Toronto	45	23
John Carlson, Washington	45	22
Brenden Dillon, San Jose	49	22
Mikael Backlund, Calgary	44	21
Mattias Ekholm, Nashville	47	21
Johnny Gaudreau, Calgary	48	20
Ryan McDonagh, Tampa Bay	47	20
Sidney Crosby, Pittsburgh	43	19
Mark Scheifele, Winnipeg	46	19
Nick Bonino, Nashville	47	18

Around the league

Hulking defensemen adapting

Big-hitting dinosaur 'D' men don't last long in today's game

BY STEPHEN WHYNO
Associated Press

When John Tortorella compares Brooks Orpik to a creature that went extinct 65 million years ago, he means it affectionately.

"He's a little bit of a dinosaur because he hits, and there isn't a lot of hitting in this game," Tortorella said.

Yet there's still a Brooks Orpik, who helped the Washington Capitals win the Stanley Cup last season and played his 1,000th NHL regular-season game Tuesday as more of a relic than a dinosaur. Big, rugged, defensive defensemen are going the way of prehistoric animals, mask-less goaltenders, helmet-less skaters and enforcers, except the ones like Orpik who have adapted to keep pace with the ever-quickening speed of modern hockey.

"I think if you don't adapt to where the league's going, then you're pushed out," Orpik said. "If you weren't willing to adjust how you trained or maybe shed some weight, that would push you out of the league. Not necessarily kind of what your role was. But there's that and there's obviously more of an emphasis on being able to move the puck up quickly."

NHL teams are looking for the next Erik Karlsson or Thomas Chabot — a smaller, more mobile defenseman who can lead the rush and pile up the points — than the next Orpik. Slower, play-it-safe defensemen like 6-foot-7, 245-pound Hal Gill don't roam the ice anymore, and those players must approach the game differently.

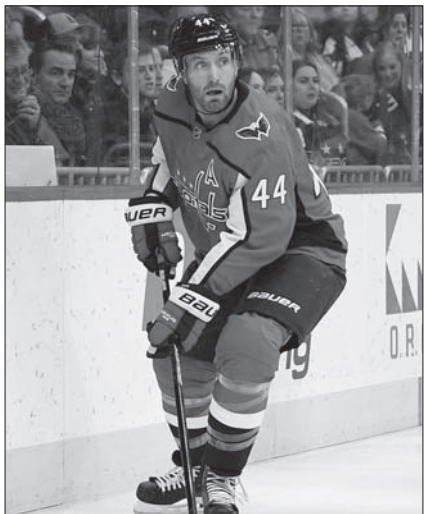
"I've heard people come up and say, 'Hey, my kid plays just like you,'" Gill said. "And I'm like, 'Well, you better change quick.'"

Tortorella, who coached Tampa Bay to the Stanley Cup in 2004 and is in his fourth season with Columbus, sees value in big "miserable" defenders who can play a tough game underneath the hash marks. He believes the depletion of that kind of player has contributed to an increase in scoring over recent years — which is what the NHL wants at the expense of some old-school muscle.

Players like Orpik and St. Louis' Robert Bortuzzo are far less prevalent than when Gill stayed in the NHL for 16 years from the late 1990s through 2013. Bortuzzo thinks the term "stay-at-home" should become extinct because even the less fleet of foot defensemen have to do more than just sit back, hit and defend like they used to for a living.

"Defensively conscious would probably be a better term nowadays and one that fits the game," the 6-4, 216-pound Bortuzzo said. "At this stage of the game, you need to be able to join the rush, you need to be able to move pucks. ... The days of a defenseman not being able to skate and keep up with the pace of play is done. Guys are too fast and moving too quick."

No one's confusing Orpik, Bortuzzo, Vegas' Deryk Engelland or Buffalo's Zach Bogosian for speed demons, but puck moving lets those players keep jobs in the NHL. Bortuzzo said his focus has always been on his skating, and similarly Orpik and Boston's Zdeno Chara have worked with skating coach Adam Nicholas to improve their technique and adapt to changing times.



NICK WASS/AP

The Washington Capitals' Brooks Orpik used to be a stay-at-home, physical defenseman who dished out hits, but he's adapted his game to become a more offensive-minded defenseman.

Even if they can't get markedly faster, they can better manage their skates and sticks and use their size as an advantage rather than a detriment.

"What I work on with those guys a ton is just always giving them good footwork-type drills and suggestions to allow them to still be able to control space and tempo," Nicholas said. "What we talk a lot about is continuing to be puck-moving machines and how to always stack decks in your favor to have time and space, control it and transition pucks very quickly."

Being a "defensively conscious" defenseman is becoming a lost art, but coaches and teammates love guys who save goals with blocked shots, big hits and some snarl. Gill sees value in the kind of simplicity Hall of Famer Nicklas Lidstrom played with, and having contrasting styles on the blue line allows skilled, jump-up-in-the-play defensemen to take some more risks and score goals.

"They're a real good safety valve a lot of time for D-men who do want to get up the ice and move the puck," Blues captain Alex Pietrangelo said. "You can't just have offensive defensemen throughout your lineup. You want to have guys who will take care of the back end. You need guys that can play both ends of the ice."

JASON FRANSON, THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

The Buffalo Sabres' Zach Bogosian, right, and the Edmonton Oilers' Jesse Puljujarvi mix it up Monday in Edmonton, Alberta.

Bob back in blue

The Columbus Blue Jackets made quick work of an "incident" involving goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky last week, punishing him by making him miss a game, meeting with him and getting him back with the team the next morning. Captain Nick Foligno said the leadership group, coaching staff and front office are adept at pushing aside distractions — which is important given that Bobrovsky and scoring winger Artemi Panarin could be free agents this summer.

"No matter who it is, it's all right, we're going to handle the situation and get back to what really matters and that's trying to win hockey games," Foligno said. "We're trying to win hockey games, trying to become a Stanley Cup champion and nothing's going to get in the way of that. That's kind of the message for everybody."

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Top-seeded Halep rallies

Djokovic, Serena advance; Wawrinka eliminated

By Howard Fendrich
Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Push Simona Halep to the brink, and she summons her best.

The Australian Open's top-seeded woman got all she could handle from 20-year-old American Sofia Kenin in the second round before taking the last four games to emerge with a 6-3, 6-7 (5), 6-4 victory that took 2½ hours Thursday.

"Well, I have no idea how I won this tonight," said Halep, the reigning French Open champion. "It's so tough to explain what happened on court."

A year ago at Melbourne Park, Halep was a point from being eliminated in two matches but came back each time en route to reaching the final. In the first round this year, she was down a set and a break before turning things around. And this time, against a hard-hitting Kenin, Halep trailed 4-2 in the third set and managed to not cede another game.

And that was despite getting what she described as "a little bit injured" in the second set, something that seemed clear from the way she wasn't always able to run with her usual verve.

"Hopefully," said Halep, whose No. 1 ranking is up for grabs during the Australian Open, "next round I play better."

That third-round matchup will be quite intriguing, because it'll be against seven-time Grand Slam champion and former No. 1 Venus Williams. And the winner of that could face Williams' younger sister, 23-time major champ Serena, in the fourth round.

Venus won a three-setter that finished a little before Halep's did — and in much more emphatic fashion. Pushed to that deciding set by getting broken to end the second, Venus ran away with the win down the stretch, defeating Alize Cornet 6-3, 4-6, 6-0.

So what was the difference in the lopsided third set?

"She was just putting more intensity than me. She was hitting harder, deeper," Cornet said. "I had a little less energy than in the second set and she took advantage of it and really raised her level."

The 38-year-old Venus, unseeded at a major for the first time in five years, was the runner-up in Australia to Serena in 2003 and 2017.

Serena advanced to the third round by beating 2014 Wimbledon finalist Eugenie Bouchard 6-2, 6-2, reeling off the last five games and 16 of the final 20 points. That match was followed in Rod Laver Arena by No. 1 Novak Djokovic's 6-3, 7-5, 6-4 victory over Jo-Wilfried Tsonga in a rematch of the 2008 final at Melbourne Park.

That one ended in the wee hours of Friday, just after two-time major champion Garbine Muguruza and Johanna Konta got going at 12:30 a.m. in what is believed to be the latest-starting match in tournament history. Muguruza eventually won 6-4, 6-7 (3), 7-5 at 3:12 a.m.

Other winners in the women's draw included reigning U.S. Open champion Naomi Osaka, past U.S. Open runners-up Karolina Pliskova and Madison Keys, No. 27-seeded Camila Giorgi and No. 28 Hsieh Su-Wei.

In men's action, Stan Wawrinka was up a set and just two points away from taking the second against Milos Raonic. Couldn't do it.

About an hour later, 2014 champion Wawrinka was a single point from grabbing the third set. Denied again.

And another hour after that, Wawrinka was two points from seizing the fourth to force a fifth. Nope, not on this afternoon.

Wawrinka kept coming oh-so-close, and Raonic kept hanging in there and toughing out the most important moments along the way to a 6-7 (4), 7-6 (6), 7-6 (11), 7-6 (5) victory that put the 16th-seeded Canadian into the third round.

"I missed a few little points," Wawrinka said, "that could have changed the match."

So true.

"It feels like 4 hours passed by in about 15 minutes. ... The adrenaline takes over," said Raonic, the runner-up at Wimbledon in 2016. "I was very fortunate to stay alive in that fourth set."

They were interrupted for about a half-hour while the roof at Rod Laver Arena was shut because of rain at 4-all in the third set.

Raonic thought that helped him quite a bit.

"I do a little bit better indoors than outdoors," he said, "so thank you for raining up there."

In other men's action on Day 4, No. 4 seed Alexander Zverev won in five sets and 2014 U.S. Open runner-up Kei Nishikori withstood 59 aces from 39-year-old Ivo Karlovic en route to a 6-3, 7-6 (6), 5-7, 5-7, 7-6 (7) victory, but No. 7 Dominic Thiem retired from his match in the third set after dropping the first two, and 2018 Australian Open semifinalist Hyeon Chung lost to Pierre-Hugues Herbert 6-2, 1-6, 6-2, 6-4.

Raonic delivered 39 aces, part of an impressive ratio of 84 total winners to only 44 unforced errors.

This was a matchup probably better suited to the second week than the second round of a Grand Slam tournament, given both men's credentials. But Wawrinka, a three-time major champion once ranked as high as No. 3, dropped out of the top 250 last season, when he had surgery on his left knee.

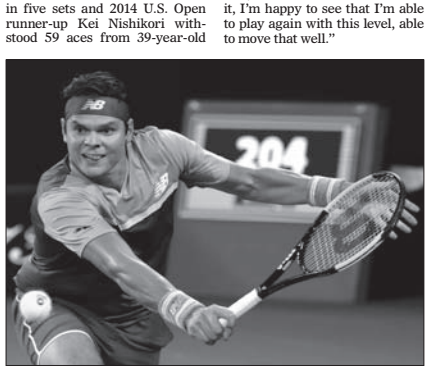
His signature one-handed backhand is as dangerous as ever — he had a 16-2 edge in winners on that shot Thursday — and he hit 28 aces of his own. But as even as the match was in many respects — Raonic only won two more points overall, 163-161 — Wawrinka couldn't come through when he really needed to.

Raonic had plenty to do with that, of course, including in the third-set tiebreaker, when he served his way out of trouble.

Wawrinka's three set points there came at 6-5, when Raonic delivered a serve at 129 mph (208 kph) followed by a forehand volley winner; at 8-7, when Raonic's 125 mph serve drew a missed return; and at 10-9, when an ace at 132 mph did the trick. A 123 mph service winner gave Raonic that set.

In the last tiebreaker, Wawrinka was up 5-4 before Raonic closed with three consecutive points to avoid heading to a fifth set.

"Today, I'm sad and frustrated," Wawrinka said. "But in general, if I take some distance with it, I'm happy to see that I'm able to play again with this level, able to move that well."



AARON FAVILA/AP

Milos Raonic makes a backhand return to Stan Wawrinka during their match Thursday in Melbourne, Australia.

AARON FAVILA/AP

Simona Halep celebrates Thursday after defeating Sofia Kenin in their second-round match in Melbourne, Australia.

Scoreboard

Wednesday

at Melbourne Park
Melbourne, Australia
Surface: Hard-Outdoor
Second Round
Singles
Men

Novak Djokovic (1), Serbia, def. Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, France, 6-3, 7-5, 6-4.

Denis Shapovalov (25), Canada, def. Taro Daniel, Japan, 6-3, 7-6 (2), 6-3.

David Goffin (21), Belgium, def. Marius Copil, Romania, 5-7, 7-5, 6-2, 6-4.

Daniil Medvedev (15), Russia, def. Ryan Harrison, United States, 6-3, 6-3, 6-3.

Fabio Fognini (12), Italy, def. Leonardo Mayer, Argentina, 7-6 (3), 6-3, 7-6 (5).

Pablo Carreno-Busta (23), Spain, def. Ilya Ivashka, Belarus, 6-2, 6-3, 7-6 (7).

Joao Sousa, Portugal, def. Philipp Kohlschreiber (32), Germany, 7-5, 4-6, 7-6 (4), 5-7, 6-4.

Kei Nishikori (8), Japan, def. Ivo Karlovic, Croatia, 6-3, 7-6 (6), 5-7, 5-7, 7-6 (7).

Alex Bolt, Australia, def. Gilles Simon (29), France, 2-6, 6-4, 4-6, 7-6 (8), 6-4.

Pierre-Hugues Herbert, France, def. Hyeon Chung (24), Republic of Korea, 6-2, 1-6, 6-2, 6-4.

Milos Raonic (16), Canada, def. Stan Wawrinka, Switzerland, 6-7 (4), 7-6 (6), 7-6 (11), 7-6 (5).

Borna Coric (11), Croatia, def. Marton Fucsovics, Hungary, 6-4, 6-3, 6-4.

Filip Krajinovic, Serbia, def. Evgeny Donskoy, Russia, 6-4, 7-6 (8), 7-6 (2).

Lucas Pouille (28), France, def. Maximilian Marterer, Germany, 7-6 (8), 7-6 (8), 5-7, 6-4.

Alexei Popyrin, Australia, def. Dominic Thiem (7), Austria, 7-5, 6-4, 2-0, ret.

Women
Second Round

Simona Halep (1), Romania, def. Sofia Kenin, United States, 6-3, 6-7 (5), 6-4.

Venus Williams, United States, def. Alize Cornet, France, 6-3, 4-6, 6-0.

Dayana Yastremska, Ukraine, def. Carla Suarez-Navarro (23), Spain, 6-3, 3-6, 6-1.

Serena Williams (16), United States, def. Eugenie Bouchard, Canada, 6-2, 6-2.

Timea Bacsinszky, Switzerland, def. Natalia Vikhlyantseva, Russia, 6-2, 7-5.

Camila Giorgi (27), Italy, def. Iga Swiatek, Poland, 6-2, 6-0.

Karolina Pliskova (7), Czech Republic, def. Madison Brengle, US, 4-6, 6-1, 6-0.

Naomi Osaka (4), Japan, def. Tamara Zidansek, Slovenia, 6-2, 6-4.

Su-Wei Hsieh (28), Taiwan, def. Laura Siegemund, Germany, 6-3, 6-4.

Qiang Wang (21), China, def. Aleksandra Krunic, Serbia, 6-2, 6-3.

Anastasija Sevastova (13), Latvia, def. Bianca Vanessa Andreescu, Canada, 6-3, 3-6, 6-2.

Elise Mertens (12), Belgium, def. Margarita Gasparyan, Russia, 6-1, 7-5.

Madison Keys (17), United States, def. Anastasia Potapova, Russia, 6-3, 6-4.

Shuai Zhang, China, def. Kristyna Pliskova, Czech Republic, 6-3, 7-5.

Elina Svitolina (6), Ukraine, def. Viktoria Kuzmova, Slovakia, 6-4, 6-1.

Men's Doubles
First Round

Oliver Marach, Austria and Mate Pavic (1), Croatia, def. Andreas Seppi, Italy and Simone Bolelli, Italy, 7-5, 6-7 (7), 6-0.

Wesley Koolhof, Netherlands and Marcus Daniell, New Zealand, def. Lleyton Hewitt, Australia and John-Patrick Smith, Australia, 3-6, 6-1, 6-4.

Bruno Soares, Brazil and Jamie Murray (3), Britain, def. Roman Jebavy, Czech Republic and Andres Molteni, Argentina, 6-4, 7-6 (11).

Ken Skupski, Britain and Neal Skupski, Britain, def. James Duckworth, Australia and Jordan Thompson, Australia, 6-3, 6-4.

Denis Kudla, US and Steve Johnson, US, def. Robert Lindstedt, Sweden and Matthew Ebden, Australia, 7-5, 6-3.

Malek Jaziri, Tunisia and Radu Albot, Moldova, def. Jan-Lennard Struff, Germany and Ben Mclachlan (8), Japan, 6-2, 3-6, 7-6 (9).

Fernando Verdasco, Spain and Pablo Cuevas, Uruguay, def. Philipp Oswald, Austria and Tim Puetz, Germany, 6-3, 6-4.

Rajeev Ram, US and Joe Salisbury (11), Britain, def. Hans Podlipnik, Chile and Guido Pella, Argentina, 6-0, 6-4.

Cameron Norrie, Britain and Taylor Fritz, United States, def. Mirza Basic, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Damir Dzumhur, Bosnia-Herzegovina, 7-6 (7), 7-5.

Jack Sock, United States and Jack Withrow, United States, def. Robert Farah, Colombia and Juan Sebastian Cabal (2), Colombia, 6-7 (6), 6-3, 6-4.

Women's Doubles
First Round

Sabrina Santamaria, United States and Veronika Kudermetova, Russia, def. Donna Vekic, Croatia and Belinda Bencic, Switzerland, 6-3, 6-1.

Elise Mertens, Belgium and Aryna Sabalenka, Belarus, def. Bethanie Mattek-Sands, United States and Demi Schuurs (15), Netherlands, 6-2, 3-6, 6-3.

Mihaela Buzarnescu, Romania and Irina-Camelia Begu (10), Romania, def. Lizette Cabrera, Australia and Jaimee Fourlis, Australia, 7-5, 3-6, 6-4.

Abigail Spears, US and Su-Wei Hsieh (8), Taiwan, def. Bernarda Pera, US and Rebecca Peterson, Sweden, 6-3, 6-4.

Barbora Strycova, Czech Republic and Marketa Vondrousova, Czech Republic, def. Yifan Xu, China and Gabriela Dabrowski (3), Canada, 6-2, 3-6, 6-3.

Zarina Diyas, Kazakhstan and Yulia Putintseva, Kazakhstan, def. Irina Khromacheva, Russia and Dalila Jakupovic, Slovenia, 6-3, 6-4.

Alison Bai, Australia and Zoe Hives, Australia, def. Evgeniya Rodina, Russia and Luksika Kumkhum, Thailand, 2-6, 6-3, 6-4.

Sorana Cirstea, Romania and Jelena Ostapenko, Latvia, def. Ying-Ying Duan, China and Vera Lapko, Belarus, 6-2, 6-7 (3), 7-6 (7).

Latisha Chan, Taiwan and Hao-Ching Chan (7), Taiwan, def. Arina Rodionova, Australia and Ellen Perez, Australia, 6-3, 7-5.

Qiang Wang, China and Xinyu Jiang, China, def. Pauline Parmentier, France and Maria Sakkari, Greece, 6-3, 6-4.

Aliaksandra Sasnovich, Belarus and Taylor Townsend, United States, def. Alison van Uytvanck, Belgium and Alexa Guarachi Mathison, Chile, 7-6 (3), 6-2.

Alicja Rosolska, Poland and Eri Hozumi (11), Japan, def. Andrea Petkovic, Germany and Monica Puig, Puerto Rico, 7-5, 6-4.

Victoria Azarenka, Belarus and Ashleigh Barty, Australia, def. Shuai Peng, China and Zhaoxuan Yang (16), China, 7-5, 4-6, 7-5.

Alison Riske, United States and Jennifer Brady, United States, def. Astra Sharma, Australia and Isabelle Wallace, Australia, 4-6, 6-3, 6-2.

Katarina Srebotnik, Slovenia and Raquel Atawo (9), US, def. Danielle Rose Collins, US and Amanda Anisimova, US, 6-1, 6-3.

Kirsten Flipkens, Belgium and Johanna Larsson (13), Sweden, def. Vera Zvonareva, Russia and Timea Bacsinszky, Switzerland, 6-4, 6-3.

Anett Kontaveit, Estonia and Harriet Dart, Britain, def. Priscilla Hon, Australia and Kimberly Birrell, Australia, 6-4, 2-6, 6-4.

Darija Jurak, Croatia and Xinyun Han, China, def. Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova, Russia and Anastasija Sevastova, Latvia, 6-7 (4), 6-3, 6-4.

Kristina Mladenovic, France and Timea Babos (2), Hungary, def. Galina Voskoboeva, Kazakhstan and Raluca-Ioana Olaru, Romania, 6-0, 6-3.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL/MMA

Patrick Semansky/AP

Maryland guard Anthony Cowan Jr., left, and forward Bruno Fernando celebrate after beating Indiana last Friday.

Young Maryland continues finding new ways to win

By David Ginsburg
Associated Press

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — The most intriguing aspect of Maryland's unexpected ascent into the Top 25 is that the Terrapins have won in so many different ways — in spite of their youth.

During a six-game winning streak that's lifted Maryland into third place in the Big Ten, the 19th-ranked Terps (15-3, 6-1) have rallied from behind, blown big leads and prevailed even when their best players were held in check.

Last week, highly touted freshman Jalen Smith didn't make a basket, yet Maryland overcame a 14-point deficit to beat Indiana. On Monday night, the Terrapins squandered a 21-point, second-half lead before squeezing past Wisconsin 64-60.

Five of Maryland's next six games will be played away from home, so this season's roller-coaster ride could easily continue. Coach Mark Turgeon can only hope that his freshman-laden team can appreciate what it's accomplished thus far and will continue to grow.

"We are the fifth-youngest team in Division I basketball," Turgeon said after the Wisconsin game. "It's the best league in the country, and just to get another (win) is terrific for us. It's not getting any easier. We have to go on the road, Ohio State, Michigan State the next two games."

Maryland was cruising against the Badgers until 6-foot-10 sophomore Bruno Fernando picked up his fourth foul. Within five minutes, a 51-36 lead became 57-54.

"We didn't have Bruno most of the second half because of foul trouble. But we found a way to win and we just continue to find a way to win," sophomore guard Darryl Morsell said.

Maryland is 5-1 when trailing at halftime, including 4-0 in the Big Ten. During their current winning streak, the Terps trailed Radford, Minnesota and Indiana before rallying.

The script was flipped against Wisconsin. Maryland gave away a 33-15 halftime lead before Anthony Cowan Jr. came to the rescue with the game-winning shot from beyond the arc in the closing seconds.

"Everybody is saying you have to start games better, but I would rather finish them better, right?" Turgeon said. "So now everybody is going to be saying we need to finish the games better."

Morsell, and freshmen Smith, Eric Ayala, Aaron Wiggins and Ricky Lindo Jr. have performed well as the supporting cast for Cowan, the team's leading scorer, and Fernando, a force in the middle who could very well be headed to the NBA after this season.

"He's a load. He's a much improved player, first to second year," Indiana coach Archie Miller said of Fernando. "He's one of the better guys in our league."

Back in October, Turgeon said this would be a team that improved as the season wore on. That's what happened so far, and the goal is to keep it going through the NCAA Tournament.

"We have a huge upside. We talk about it in the locker room all of the time," Turgeon said. "I'd like to think how far we've come since December 27th, where can we be on February 1st and where can we be on February 15th. We'll see, because it's a willing team."

Two homes but one goal

Dillashaw splits time between families as he cuts weight

By Greg Beacham
Associated Press

YORBA LINDA, Calif. — Although T.J. Dillashaw has a wife and a young son in a beautiful home in Orange County, he spends much of his professional life several miles away at his other home.

The UFC bantamweight champion trains in the garage of Sam Calavitta, a triathlete math professor and performance specialist who coaches Dillashaw, Bellator's Aaron Pico and other elite athletes. Dillashaw also spends countless hours at the nearby kitchen table with Calavitta's nine children, eating daily meals prepared by Calavitta's wife and daughters.

Dillashaw's entire life revolves around his two homes, and he believes his two families provide him with the strength and grounding to do something nobody in UFC history has accomplished.

The 135-pound champion is going against conventional wisdom by cutting 10 pounds of weight to fight flyweight champ Henry Cejudo on Saturday night in Brooklyn.

Elite mixed martial artists over 30 are supposed to get bigger, not smaller. All three UFC fighters who have ever won simultaneous belts in two weight classes — Conor McGregor, Daniel Cormier and Amanda Nunes — did it by going up in weight, not down.

Dillashaw and Calavitta were confident he could do it with a scientific, meticulously measured plan that takes the nearly 33-year-old Dillashaw down to a weight at which the former Cal State Fullerton wrestler hadn't competed since he was a teenager.

"I always knew I could make the weight, but I'm surprised at how good I feel trying to get down there," Dillashaw said. "It's because of how professional I took it. My diet has been strict. My workout routine has been strict. I'm lean, and everyone thinks I'm lying, but I'm stronger now than I was last camp."

Instead of relying on the mix of crash dieting, sauna sweats and dehydration that has been the time-tested formula for fighters determined to compete at the smallest possible weight, Calavitta and Dillashaw created a three-month regimen of precise eating, working out and constant monitoring of every factor in between. Every calorie counts in the home-cooked meals eaten by Dillashaw at Calavitta's table, but the plan is much more than a diet.

"We're not really presenting him something that is so much discipline or deprivation as it is lifestyle," said Calavitta, an award-winning calculus teacher and former aerospace engineer who has competed in multiple triathlons. "It's to make your life better now as well as after fighting, so you can spend many, many years with your wife and your kids with a healthy and truthful life without many of the negative effects (of fighting)."

Calavitta planned out every step in the process even before Dillashaw (16-3) agreed to the fight against Cejudo (13-2).

Dillashaw has talked about going down to 125 pounds for several years, particularly for a big-money fight against long-reigning champ Demetrious "Mighty Mouse" Johnson. Right after Cejudo upset Johnson last August on the same Los Angeles card on which Dillashaw trounced Cody Garbrandt, the UFC approached Dillashaw with a chance at the flyweight belt.

Dillashaw asked Calavitta if he could do it. Calavitta did some calculations on the way home from Staples Center and then spoke to Dillashaw.

"Well, I've followed the numbers here, and I believe the numbers allow me to bring you down safely without missing a single meal, without missing a single drink," Calavitta said.

Calavitta projected his plan over 16 weeks, and Dillashaw began working before the holidays. But by the time the bout was finalized, they only had 12 weeks to get down to 125 pounds — and then 11 weeks when the UFC asked Dillashaw to move up the fight from Jan. 26 in Anaheim to Saturday in Brooklyn.

Chris Carlson/AP

T.J. Dillashaw smiles after his win against Cody Garbrandt in a UFC bantamweight mixed martial arts title fight at UFC 227 in Los Angeles on Aug. 4. T.J. Dillashaw is going against conventional wisdom by cutting 10 pounds of weight to fight for the flyweight title Saturday.

> **'I always knew I could make the weight, but I'm surprised how good I feel trying to get down there.'**
>
> **D.J. Dillashaw**
> UFC bantamweight champion

"One of the things you learn as a teacher and as a coach is that's going to be effective to always have two, three, four and five contingency plans," Calavitta said. "Because nothing ever goes exactly the way you think."

Calavitta injects elements of Ironman triathlon training into Dillashaw's preparations, and their rigorous discipline has allowed Dillashaw to get well within range of his goal weight several days before Friday's weigh-in. Dillashaw woke up Monday weighing 135 pounds, which is 5 pounds closer to the 125-pound weight limit than Dillashaw normally weighs at this point in the week when fighting at 135 pounds.

"He doesn't run from anything, especially when hard work is in front of him," Calavitta said.

Several current and former fighters have scoffed at Dillashaw's decision, either worrying about Dillashaw's decision or reacting negatively to Dillashaw's physical appearance on Instagram. Cejudo has had his own problems making weight for past fights, yet he still weighed in, saying Dillashaw "looks like Pee Wee Herman" or "a cross-country runner."

In person, Dillashaw has sharply defined cheekbones, and it's clear to see he has little excess flesh on his body even while he's fully clothed and sipping tea. But Dillashaw looks less hollow than many fighters in the final days of a weight cut, and he insists he feels fit and fantastic.

"Of course I'm going to be skinny," Dillashaw said. "I'm going down a weight class. If I were to wait and crash all the weight the last night (before the weigh-in), I would look better throughout camp. I'd look more normal, (but) then I would have to crash at the end and my performance wouldn't be as good. I'm more worried about the performance."

Calavitta says he doesn't help Dillashaw or Pico for money, and he isn't interested in turning his training philosophy into a financial windfall. He did spend three years creating the TrainChamp app, which reveals elements of the 12-week plan by which Dillashaw swears.

Sign: Offense wins titles in today's NFL

FROM BACK PAGE

and the 11,952 points scored were the second-most ever.

The two teams with the stingiest defenses reached the playoffs — Chicago and Baltimore — but lost at home in the wild-card round.

"You have explosive players in the postseason, guys who are extremely talented, guys who are represented in the Pro Bowl, the All-Pro team," Saints coach Sean Payton said Wednesday.

The success starts at quarterback with Tom Brady, Drew Brees, Patrick Mahomes and Jared Goff leading the way. Brady's Patriots are the only team of the four that didn't average at least 30 points, scoring 27.3. Kansas City led the way at 35.3 with Mahomes throwing 50 touchdown passes. Los Angeles was next at 32.9 and New Orleans averaged 31.5.

Elite QBs aren't the only thing these teams have in common. The Rams, Patriots and Saints were among the top six in rushing.

C.J. Anderson (123) and Todd Gurley (115) had big games as Los Angeles ran for 273 yards in a 30-22 win against Dallas in the divisional round.

Sony Michel ran for 129 yards and three TDs in New England's 41-28 victory over the Chargers last week. Brady also threw for 343 yards.

Alvin Kamara and Mark Ingram combined for 124 yards rushing as New Orleans held on to beat Philadelphia 20-14. Brees had 301 yards passing and two scores.

"They can beat you in both ways, they can run it or they can throw it," Rams coach Sean McVay said of the Saints. "That's what really presents such a great challenge because they've got a Hall of Fame quarterback and they got an elite running back, and they've got a great system."

The Chiefs were in the middle of the pack on the ground during the season but Damien Williams had 129 yards in a 31-13 rout of the Colts.

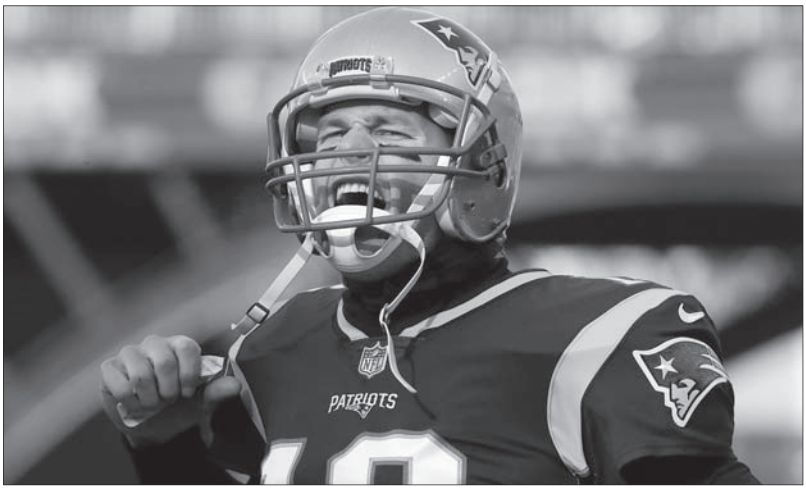
"Andy's an offensive coach so the offensive plays they get on special teams and the offensive plays they get on offense, when you combine all of that together, it's a lot of firepower and a lot of explosive plays," Patriots coach Bill Belichick said of the Chiefs. "Andy's teams are always tough, well-disciplined. They don't make a lot of mistakes. They make you beat them and that's hard to do because they're sound and he gets good players and he coaches them well and they're tough."

Other than Belichick, each team has offensive-minded coaches. Payton, Reid and McVay earned their way on that side of the ball. The 32-year-old McVay is the youngest coach to win a playoff game.

Did you know

Both of this weekend's games are rematches from thrilling contests in the regular season.
The Patriots (12-5) beat the Chiefs (14-3) 43-40 at home in October. The Saints (14-3) defeated the Rams (14-3) 45-35 at home in November.

SOURCE: Associated Press



CHARLES KRUPA/AP

New England quarterback Tom Brady reacts prior to last Sunday's divisional playoff game against the Los Angeles Chargers in Foxborough, Mass. The Patriots won 41-28, advancing to face the Chiefs on Sunday for the AFC championship in Kansas City, Mo.

Different approaches, similar results

Patriots' Brady, Chiefs' Mahomes achieve success different ways

By DAVE SKRETTA
Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — One of them is a sixth-round pick who married a supermodel, became one of the greatest quarterbacks in NFL history and is still going strong well past his 41st birthday.

The other is a first-round pick who is still dating his high school sweetheart, has exactly one season as an NFL starter on his résumé and just turned 23 earlier this season.

> **'I don't know about comparisons. Mahomes is an outstanding player in every facet of the game.'**
>
> **Bill Belichick**
> New England coach, on similarities between the Chiefs' Pat Mahomes and the Patriots' 3-time MVP QB Tom Brady.

Indeed, few similarities exist when it comes to Patriots quarterback Tom Brady and Chiefs counterpart Patrick Mahomes, whose teams will meet for the AFC title at Arrowhead Stadium on Sunday.

Brady is the suave star with the polished skillset and more postseason experience than any QB in history, while Mahomes is the sling-it-anywhere standout who just one day may take over the mantle as best in the game.

Both get the job done, even if they do it in very different ways.

"I don't know about comparisons," Patriots coach Bill Belichick said. "Look, Mahomes is an outstanding player in every facet of the game. He's got a strong arm. He can throw the ball the length of the field. He has great touch. He has the ability to read coverages and extend plays, make good decisions and make explosive plays without taking too much of a risk or putting his team in jeopardy.

"He does all of those things well," Belichick said, "and that's a credit to him."

Brady has a strong arm, too, even if it's not what it once was. He still has great touch and his ability to read coverages may be the best in the game, helping him lead the Patriots to their eighth consecutive AFC title game.

But that is just about where the similarities end.

Brady prefers to stand in the pocket and deliver the ball the same way a blackjack dealer stands behind his table and distributes cards. He moves around when he's under pressure but rarely takes off running, and he's as likely to chuck the ball into the third row on a broken play as take a risk downfield.

Unlike Brady, Mahomes thrives when everything collapses around him. He'll throw caution to the wind and run for a first down — or a touchdown as he did last week against Indianapolis — but is just as dangerous in the passing game, where his knack for keeping his eyes downfield makes him a constant threat.

Mahomes matched Brady's best season by throwing 50 touchdown passes as the Chiefs' first-year starter, and he eclipsed 5,000 yards though the air, something his counterpart has accomplished just once.

But perhaps most importantly, he led the Chiefs to a better record than the Patriots to secure home-field advantage, and that means Mahomes will have 80,000 fans behind him with a shot at the Super Bowl on the line.

It'll be edge-of-your seat viewing, unless you're playing on defense.

JOHN SLEEZER, KANSAS CITY STAR/AP

Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes looks at the Lamar Hunt Trophy during a news conference on Wednesday in Kansas City, Mo.

NFL PLAYOFFS

Prime number: Edelman shows vintage side

By Kyle Hightower
Associated Press

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. — His face was still a little flushed from stepping out of the subfreezing temperatures at Gillette Stadium field just minutes following the Patriots' 41-28 divisional-round win over the Los Angeles Chargers on Sunday.

Still, Julian Edelman stood at his locker satisfied — at least for a moment.

Then he was asked when he would start his preparations for their AFC championship game matchup with the Kansas City Chiefs.

"Immediately," he said without hesitation. "We're going to go play the best team in the AFC, the No. 1 seed. It's going to start with an unbelievable week of practice, preparation. We need to do that to give ourselves the best chance to win."

Making the most of every one of his opportunities has become a hallmark of Edelman's 10 seasons in New England.

The Patriots were dealt a blow prior to their final two regular-season games when Josh Gordon was suspended for a violation of the league's substance abuse policy.

But what could have created a hole in New England's receiving group has been plugged by its oldest member.

The 32-year-old Edelman has put together back-to-back vintage performances and is expected to again play a big role during Sunday's AFC championship game.

Photos by Charles Krupa/AP

New England wide receiver Julian Edelman catches a pass in front of Los Angeles Chargers defensive back Desmond King during the Patriots' AFC divisional playoff win last week. At right, Edelman, 32, warms up before the game. He had a career-high with 151 receiving yards in the game.

Edelman tied his regular-season high of nine catches and had a career playoff-best 151 yards receiving in New England's win over Los Angeles.

With 98 playoff receptions during his career, he moved past Reggie Wayne (93) and is second all-time behind Jerry Rice with 151. Edelman's five career 100-yard receiving games in the postseason trail only Rice's eight and Michael Irvin's six.

Edelman, who missed last season with a torn anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee and sat out the first four games of this season for violating the NFL's policy on performance-enhancers, empathizes with Gordon's situation.

"He was making plays for us. We wish him the best to get himself right," Edelman said. "That's a tough thing to go through. We're here to support him. But sometimes the train just has to keep on going. ... And as much as you miss him, you gotta start thinking about what you gotta do to keep on going out and try to win ballgames."

The week after Gordon's suspension, Edelman caught five of the six balls thrown to him for 69 yards and a touchdown.

Over the past three games, including the playoff win over the Chargers, Edelman has been targeted by Brady 29 times, catching 20 passes for 290 yards and a pair of touchdowns.

Edelman's performance on Sunday was in many ways a throwback effort by a receiver that has developed a reputation of being one of Brady's most dependable receivers in the playoffs. On Sunday, he was instrumental in helping the Patriots score on each of the first four drives of the game.

He had a third-down catch on their opening scoring drive and had a 28-yard catch on their second drive that got the Patriots in the red zone. It set up Sony Michel's second rushing touchdown of the game just a play later. It also helped spread out the Los Angeles defense and opened the field for New England's rushing attack.

Amid uncertainty, Ingram cherishes playoff run

By Brett Martel
Associated Press

METAIRIE, La. — Mark Ingram readily acknowledges that his last game with the Saints could come Sunday, when New Orleans hosts the Los Angeles Rams in the NFC championship game.

But Ingram hasn't given up on bucking conventional wisdom and remaining with New Orleans, even though his contract is expiring and the Saints will have to worry about signing younger, more productive running back Alvin Kamara to his second NFL contract in the next couple of years.

Combined, Ingram and Kamara give the Saints one of the most formidable backfield tandems in the NFL — and an answer to the Rams duo of Todd Gurley and C.J. Anderson, which battered Dallas' defense to the tune of more than 200 yards rushing last Saturday night.

It is a formula that can potentially extend the life of a rusher's career and promote winning — two things at the top of mind for Ingram, who has become a veteran locker room leader while trying throughout his eight-year career to help get the Saints as far as they've gotten this season.

"We've got a good squad. I feel like we can do this type of thing for many more years," Ingram said. "I'm not looking just to bail out of New Orleans."

The 29-year-old Ingram, a 2009 Heisman Trophy winner with Alabama and first-round draft pick in 2011, had far from his best season, statistically speaking, in 2018. He had to sit out the first four games because of an NFL suspension stemming from the use of a banned substance.

Butch Dill/AP

New Orleans Saints running back Mark Ingram is tackled by Philadelphia Eagles free safety Avonte Maddox (29) during the Saints' NFC divisional playoff win Sunday in New Orleans. The veteran doesn't know if his contract will be renewed with the Saints.

During the Saints' last 12 games, he rushed for 645 yards and six TDs, surpassing 100 yards in a game twice this season. He also caught 21 passes for 170 yards and one TD.

Such numbers represent a considerable decline from the previous two seasons, during which Ingram eclipsed 1,000 yards rushing in each.

Yet coaches and teammates are quick to paint Ingram as one of those players whose impact goes beyond his own raw stats. They rave about his work ethic, leadership, loyalty and contagious, overt passion for the game and his team.

"He's a great teammate. He cares," Saints offensive coordinator Pete Carmichael Jr. said, adding that it's apparent Ingram's teammates "respect his game, how he plays, how he goes out and gives effort."

Kamara has said Ingram's presence "frees me up" when they are in the same formation and asserts that they always have exhibited "a genuine care and support for each other," even though they are technically competing for opportunities to have the ball.

"We look at it like, as long as we both know what we need to do, the team will be successful," Kamara said.

Coach Sean Payton has extolled the value of having both rushers available to help reduce the physical burden on each of them.

Ingram and Kamara together "has been pretty good for us," Payton said. "It is much more difficult if you are limited to just one of those players."

AFC CHAMPIONSHIP

Pats preparing for anything in rematch

In first game, New England found it hadn't figured out KC's Mahomes

By Kyle Hightower
Associated Press

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. In their first meeting with Kansas City, the Patriots had quarterback Patrick Mahomes figured out — at least for a half.

Creative and efficient in leading the Chiefs to a 5-0 start to the regular season, the second-year phenom looked very ordinary in the opening 30 minutes of their Oct. 14 matchup with New England, completing 14 of 23 passes for 164 yards, no touchdowns and throwing two interceptions. It added up to a 24-9 halftime deficit for the Chiefs.

Then the second half began.

Over the next two quarters the 23-year-old picked apart the Patriots defense, throwing for four touchdowns, including a 67-yard TD strike to Kareem Hunt and a 75-yard TD pass to Tyreek Hill, tying the game at 40 with just over three minutes to play in the game.

It would take some late heroics by quarterback Tom Brady and a game-winning field goal in the closing seconds by Stephen Gostkowski for the Patriots to sidestep KC's comeback effort.

The Patriots have a lot more tape of Mahomes to study for the rematch in Sunday's AFC championship game. They're also hoping both history and the job they did disrupting Philip Rivers and the Chargers in the divisional round can be a starting point in slowing down Mahomes this time around.

Linebacker Dont'a Hightower said going back to what they did right in the first half against Mahomes could be the start of a plan for slowing him down in Round 2.

"We played the first half literally the exact way we wanted to," Hightower said. "We were able to mix things up, keep those guys guessing and keep them on their toes, not letting those guys make big plays.

"With an offense like that, you give (Kansas City coach) Andy Reid any kind of time and he's able to draw up a couple things, and that's something that we learned in the second half was that we've got to play a full 60 (minutes)."

Mahomes will be the sixth first-team All-Pro quarterback to face New England in the playoffs during the Belichick and Brady era.

The Patriots are 4-1 against the previous five. They have seven interceptions in those games, while allowing just six touchdowns. Two of those wins were against Peyton Manning in the AFC playoffs during the 2003 and 2004 seasons.

After coming up short during the regular season, Mahomes will again be looking to become the first opposing starting quarterback under the age of 25 to beat the Patriots under Belichick (25-0).

Mahomes went 2-4 against playoff teams this season, tossing 18 touchdowns and six interceptions in those games.

One of the things that has defined Mahomes in his first year as a full-time starter is his poise in the pocket. That, and his creativity under pressure using his running ability as well as sidearm and even no-look passes at times to keep getting the ball to his playmakers.

Defensive end Trey Flowers said being fundamentally sound, physical up front and trying to get the offense out of position should go a long way on Sunday.

"They're going to make some plays, but we've got to tackle well. And if you minimize the space with all these skills guys and fast guys, you can kind of get everybody to the ball and get some great pursuit."

Charlie Neibergall/AP

Quarterback Patrick Mahomes and the Kansas City Chiefs were 2-4 against playoff teams this season.

Steven Senne/AP

New England Patriots defensive end Trey Flowers, right, sacks Los Angeles Chargers quarterback Philip Rivers during the second half Sunday in Foxborough, Mass. Flowers says the Patriots must keep the Chiefs offense out of position in the AFC championship game.

Matchup

New England Patriots (12-5) at Kansas City Chiefs (13-4)

AFN-Sports, 12:30 a.m. Monday CET; 8:30 a.m. Monday JKT

SERIES RECORD: Chiefs lead 18-15-3.

LAST MEETING: Patriots beat Chiefs 43-40, Oct. 14, 2018.

LAST WEEK: Patriots beat Chargers 41-28; Chiefs beat Colts 31-13.

PATRIOTS OFFENSE: OVERALL (5), RUSH (5), PASS (8).

PATRIOTS DEFENSE: OVERALL (21), RUSH (11), PASS (22).

CHIEFS OFFENSE: OVERALL (1), RUSH (16), PASS (3).

CHIEFS DEFENSE: OVERALL (31), RUSH (27), PASS (31).

STREAKS, STATS AND NOTES: Kansas City is hosting first AFC title game in franchise history. AFC championship trophy is named after Chiefs founder Lamar Hunt. ... Chiefs are 5-1 against Patriots at Arrowhead Stadium. ... Arrowhead Stadium set Guinness world record for loudest outdoor stadium during September 2014 game between Chiefs and Patriots. ... Patriots beat Chiefs 27-20 in Foxborough in January 2016 in only playoff meeting. ... Patriots beat Chiefs in Week 6 in game featuring 946 yards total offense. ... Patriots' Bill Belichick is winningest active coach with 290 wins. Chiefs' Andy Reid is second with 207. ... New England has best playoff winning percentage (.636) and is 10-4 in AFC title games. ... Patriots are playing in NFL-record eighth consecutive conference championship game. They are seeking third straight Super Bowl appearance; only two other franchises have done it. ... New England could become first team since Buffalo (1991-94) to reach Super Bowl after losing it previous season. ... New England has not won road playoff game since beating Chargers 24-21 in divisional round in 2006 season. ... Patriots WR Julian Edelman has 98 postseason receptions, second only to Jerry Rice (151). ... New England can match Pittsburgh (36) for most playoff wins by beating Chiefs. ... QB Tom Brady can match former Patriots K Adam Vinatieri, now with Colts, for most wins in NFL history (236). Brady holds postseason records for TD passes (72), yards passing (10,569), playoff wins (28) and 300-yard passing games in playoffs (15). ... Brady is 8-4 in AFC championship games, going 6-1 at home but 2-3 on road. ... New England has forced 30 turnovers in 17 games. Team forced 19 in 17 games last season. ... Patriots RB James White tied Darren Sproles' NFL postseason record with 15 catches, totaling 97 yards, in 41-28 win over Chargers last week. ... Patriots RB Sony Michel had four 100-yard rushing games in regular season and another against Chargers. ... Patriots DE Trey Flowers had 7½ sacks to lead team for third straight season. ... Patriots All-Pro CB Stephon Gilmore had 20 passes defensed this season, second best in NFL. ... New England averaged franchise-record 27 yards per kickoff return. ... Chiefs beat Colts last Saturday for first home playoff win since Jan. 8, 1994. .. Reid is coaching in sixth conference title game. ... Chiefs held Colts to 0-for-9 on third downs. ... Kansas City is 8-1 at home this season. ... Chiefs led NFL in scoring at 35.3 points per game, third-best total in league history. ... QB Patrick Mahomes had 50 TD passes, matching Brady (2007) for second most in season in NFL history. He also had NFL-leading plus-38 TD-to-INT differential and 10 300 yards or more passing games. ... Mahomes threw for 5,097 yards during regular season, second only to Steelers' Ben Roethlisberger. ... Mahomes is sixth All-Pro quarterback to face Patriots in Belichick-Brady era. Patriots are 4-1 against previous five. ... Chiefs All-Pro TE Travis Kelce had career-best 1,336 yards receiving. ... Kansas City defense tied for first in NFL with 52 sacks. DT Chris Jones has 15½ sacks. He set NFL record this season with sack in 11 consecutive games. ... Chiefs LB Dee Ford has 11 QB pressures that caused turnovers or fumbles this season, including strip-sack against Indianapolis last week. ... RB Damien Williams ran for 129 yards against Colts, third-best playoff total in franchise history. ... Kansas City was second-most efficient red-zone offense with TDs on 71.8 percent of trips this season. ... Chiefs All-Pro RT Mitchell Schwartz has played league-leading 7,397 consecutive snaps over 112 games. ... Chiefs WR Tyreek Hill, AP's All-Pro flex player, has five TDs of 50 yards or more this season. He has 18 plays of 50 yards in three seasons. ... Kansas City led NFL in first-quarter point differential at plus-91. ... Chiefs have scored at least 26 points in every game.

— Associated Press

NFC CHAMPIONSHIP

Photos by Marcio Jose Sanchez/AP

Los Angeles Rams defensive tackle Aaron Donald reacts after a sack this season. The Rams' defense, ranked No. 29 in the league, has improved in recent weeks and the team's offense is No. 3 in the league running the ball.

Rams tough on both sides

Los Angeles has added a physical swagger it lacked

By Greg Beacham
Associated Press

THOUSAND OAKS, Calif. — Marcus Peters was in Amari Cooper's face from the Cowboys' opening drive until the postgame handshakes, where the Los Angeles Rams cornerback gave one last shove to the Dallas receiver.

Peters didn't win all of his matchups with Cooper. In fact, his unnecessary roughness penalty from his first scrap with Cooper led directly to Dallas' first touchdown in the clubs' divisional playoff game Saturday night.

But for better or worse, Peters also exemplified his team's determination not to be pushed around by anyone — and sometimes, they'll even start the fights.

With their 30-22 victory over the Cowboys, the Rams (14-3) are headed to the NFC championship game against the New Orleans Saints on Sunday with an incendiary attitude and renewed proof of their toughness on both sides of the ball.

"Our sense of focus and the sense of urgency have gone up tremendously," guard Rodger Saffold said at the team's training complex Sunday while the Rams waited to find out who they would play.

The Rams have built a reputation for cerebral, clever play during two seasons of coach Sean McVay's influential offensive schemes. But one big difference between last season's team, which lost its first playoff game, and this season's NFC championship-bound squad is the Rams' provocative new defensive players, led by Peters and fellow cornerback Aqib Talib, along with a team-wide embrace of physical, disruptive play.

Los Angeles Rams running back Todd Gurley scores past Dallas Cowboys cornerback Chidobe Awuzie during the Rams' divisional playoff win Sunday.

The Rams know they'll have to be tough again when they visit New Orleans for the third time this season, counting a preseason trip to the Big Easy. Los Angeles took its first loss of the year at the Superdome on Nov. 4, falling 45-35.

The Rams also will have Talib, who was out with an injury when Los Angeles native Michael Thomas made 12 catches for 211 yards as the Saints ran wild.

"The Saints have a highly controlled game plan," Rams edge rusher Dante Fowler said. "They've got everything down pat, and they're going to execute it. You've just got to try your best to stop it. They've got great offensive linemen and a Hall of Fame quarterback and a two-headed monster in the backfield, and Michael Thomas is a great receiver. We've just got to come with it."

The Rams are respectfully confident heading into the chance to play for a Super Bowl berth — but these Rams also have an attitude, and it's taking them far.

Extracurricular exploits aside, the Rams are in their first NFC title game in 17 years because of their physical attitude in the way they manhandled the Cowboys on both sides of the line. Dallas entered the Coliseum with one of the NFL's top rushing defenses along with their own powerful rushing offense led by NFL rushing champion Ezekiel Elliott, yet the Rams dominated on the ground.

Los Angeles' rushing offense was historically good, with C.J. Anderson and Todd Gurley both topping 100 yards rushing on the way to a franchise-record 273. Both backs gave the credit to their offensive line, which led the Rams to average a whopping 5.7 yards per carry.

Matchup

Los Angeles Rams (14-3) at New Orleans Saints (14-3)

AFN-Sports
9 p.m. Sunday CET, 5 a.m. Monday JKT

SERIES RECORD: Rams lead 41-34.

LAST MEETING: The Saints beat the Rams 45-35 on Nov. 4.

RAMS OFFENSE: OVERALL (2), RUSH (3), PASS (5).

RAMS DEFENSE: OVERALL (19), RUSH (23), PASS (14).

SAINTS OFFENSE: OVERALL (8), RUSH (6), PASS (12).

SAINTS DEFENSE: OVERALL (14), RUSH (2) PASS (29).

STREAKS, STATS AND NOTES: Saints have won two of past three overall and only previous playoff meeting in Superdome in wild-card round of 2000 season. ... Both teams have won their divisions two straight times. ... Rams' 421.1 yards and 32.9 points per game led NFC. ... Rams had four players voted to Pro Bowl: QB Jared Goff, LB Corey Littleton, and two AP All-Pros, DT Aaron Donald, RB Todd Gurley. Donald was only unanimous All-Pro. ... Goff's 4,688 yards passing in regular season ranked fourth in NFL. He completed 28 of 40 for 391 yards, three TDs and INT in Week 9 loss at New Orleans. Goff completed 15 of 28 for 186 yards in playoff win over Cowboys. ... Gurley led NFL with 21 scrimmage TDs. ranked fourth with 1,831 scrimmage yards in regular season. He rushed for 115 yards, TD last week, and has 100-plus yards rushing in each of previous two playoff games. ... RB C.J. Anderson rushed for 123 yards, two TDs last week. He has four TDs rushing in past four playoff games. ... Rams WR Brandin Cooks was Saints' 2014 first-round draft choice. Cooks played first three NFL seasons with Saints, catching 215 passes for 2,861 yards and 20 TDs. He advanced to Super Bowl with Patriots last season. Cooks had 80 catches for 1,204 yards with Rams in 2018, his fourth season with at least 1,000 yards receiving. ... He had six catches for 114 yards, TD in Week 9 meeting. ... WR Robert Woods led Rams with career highs of 86 receptions for 1,219 yards. He had six catches for 69 yards last week. ... Donald led NFL with 20½ sacks and became 11th player since 1982 with 20-plus sacks in single season. Donald ranked first in NFL with 25 tackles for loss. ... Littleton led Rams with career-high 125 tackles. ... CB Aqib Talib had seven tackles, forced fumble last week. He did not play in previous meeting. ... Saints have won last seven home playoff games, starting with win over Rams under previous coach Jim Haslett. They are 6-0 in home playoff games since coach Sean Payton and QB Drew Brees joined Saints in 2006. ... Payton has 8-5 playoff record, including 2010 Super Bowl win. ... Saints had five players voted to 2019 Pro Bowl: T Terron Armstead, Brees, DE Cam Jordan, WR Michael Thomas, an All-Pro, and C Max Unger. ... Saints' 31.5 points per game ranked third in NFL, one of three teams to average 30-plus points. ... Brees had NFL single-season record 74.4 completion percentage (364 of 489) and led league with 115.7 rating in 2018. Brees, who turned 40 on Tuesday, completed 28 of 38 (73.7 percent) for 301 yards, two TDs, INT in divisional playoff win over Eagles. He's averaged 322.1 yards passing in 14 career postseason games with 31 TDs, 10 INTs. ... RB Alvin Kamara ranked second in NFL with 18 scrimmage TDs (14 rushing, 4 receiving) and ranked seventh with 1,592 scrimmage yards in 2018. He had 106 scrimmage yards (71 rushing, 35 receiving) last week. ... Thomas led NFL with 125 catches and had franchise single-season record 1,405 yards receiving, surpassing Joe Horn's 1,399 yards in 2004. Thomas had 12 receptions for 171 yards, TD last week, and had 12 catches for 211 yards, 72-yard TD in last meeting with Rams. ... Saints' defense ranked second against run, allowing 80.2 yards per game in 2018, but lost top DT Sheldon Rankins to Achilles tendon injury last week. Rankins also was second on team with eight sacks. ... Jordan had 12 sacks in 2018, his fourth season with 10-plus sacks since Saints drafted him in 2011. He has 3½ sacks, three batted passes in his past five postseason games. ... LB Demario Davis led Saints with 110 tackles in first season with club, his second consecutive season with 100-plus tackles.

Davis led Saints with eight tackles last week. ... CB Marshon Lattimore had two INTs last week, his first career playoff INTs.
— Associated Press

Saints wide receiver Michael Thomas, an All-Pro, led the league with 125 catches this season.

Bill Feig/AP

SPORTS

Still getting it done

32-year-old Edelman has stepped up to lead Pats' receivers » Page 61

NFL PLAYOFFS

SIGN of the TIMES

Four highest-scoring teams meet in conference championships for first time during Super Bowl era

By Rob Maaddi
Associated Press

Offense wins championships in the new NFL.

For the first time since the league expanded to 32 teams in 2002, none of the teams playing in the conference title game have a defense ranked in the top 10 in total yards. Only New England is among the top 10 in fewest points allowed.

But, the Chiefs, Patriots, Saints and Rams do possess the four most prolific offenses in the league. That's the first time the four highest-scoring teams play for the conference championship during the Super Bowl era.

It's fitting one of those teams will win the Vince Lombardi Trophy because offense dominated in 2018. The 1,371 touchdowns scored were the most in a season in league history

SEE SIGN ON PAGE 60

New Orleans quarterback Drew Brees
Butch Dill/AP

Lighting up the scoreboard

1,371
Total touchdowns scored this season, most in league history.

11,952
Total points scored this season, the second-most ever (11,987, 2013).

SOURCE: Associated Press

Hulking defensemen headed for extinction » NHL, Page 57

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